National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

## NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print, especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

## AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, tests publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

NL-339 (r. 88/04)

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# Virtue and Moral Authority in Jane Austen's Fiction

by

John Rowell

©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1987

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-41028-0

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

**RELEASE FORM**

NAME OF AUTHOR John Rowell.

TITLE OF THESIS Virtue and Moral Authority in Jane Austen's Fiction

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED Doctor of Philosophy

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED 1987

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

(SIGNED) .....

PERMANENT ADDRESS:

Dept. of English

University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta.

DATED August 20 19 87

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Virtue and Moral Authority in Jane Austen's Fiction submitted by John Rowell in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

R. J. Merrett
.....
Supervisor

.....

.....

Richard Bosley
.....

H. J. Reno
.....
External Examiner

Date August 7, 1987

## Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between Jane Austen's novels and the moral and aesthetic theory of Aristotle. While no historical evidence is offered that Austen read Aristotle, enough textual parallels exist to make his influence likely.

Remembering that Austen writes novels, not ethical treatises, I explore how she accommodates Aristotle's ethical philosophy in her art. I begin with a theoretical assessment of realism in fiction, particularly with respect to how characters can both carry the burden of a novel's conceptual scheme and seem to operate independently of it. This dual role is especially important for Austen, her novels being moral as well as realistic.

Chapter 11 outlines Aristotle's ethical theory and tentatively suggests parallels between his doctrine of the mean and the way the virtues in Austen's novels are delineated. Chapters 111 and 1V explore in detail the separate virtues in Austen, the former dealing with virtues of manner and the latter with virtues of character. Finally, Chapter V places Austen in a neoclassical aesthetic tradition which has its roots in Aristotle's aesthetics.

## Table of Contents


Chapter — Page

I. Introduction ..... 1

II. Virtue, Reason and Emotion ..... 23

Appendix--Table of Virtues ..... 40

III. The Virtues of Manner ..... 41

IV. The Virtues of Character ..... 78

V. Jane Austen and the Classical Tradition ..... 115

A. Social or Transcendent? ..... 115

B. Character, Plot and Action ..... 124

C. Plot, Characterization, and AuthorialPresence in Pride and Prejudice ..... 141

Conclusion ..... 159

VI. Bibliography ..... 169

Primary Sources ..... 169

Aristotle ..... 169

Jane Austen ..... 169

Selected Secondary Sources ..... 169

## I. Introduction

Many commentators assume that Austen is a Christian and that her novels exemplify Christian virtues.[1] While she undoubtetdly *was* a Christian and while there is a Christian cast to some of the virtues she illustrates in her work, it should not be overlooked that she is also a humanist and that her concerns are primarily social. As for her Christianity, it is remarkable that she hardly ever mentions God or Christ in her works, and her characters hardly ever discuss religious precepts. This absence may be due to her sense of religious discretion, but it may also suggest that Austen was not directly inspired to write by religion. There are compelling reasons to believe that her moral outlook was primarily Aristotelian, and although this is not necessarily incompatible with being a Christian, it does mean that her novels must have a radically different emphasis than one would expect from an author devoted to Christianity. The connection with Aristotle may appear unlikely if we insist, as Henry James does,[2] that Austen is foremost an unconscious artist creating while she knitted, but if, as is now becoming the more prevailing image of her, we see instead a voracious reader, someone in tune with the intellectual climate of her time, then the connection is not so unlikely.

In twentieth-century criticism of Austen, the Aristotelian connection is first noted by a philosopher, Gilbert Ryle. Ryle claims that Austen is an Aristotelian in the broad sense that she is not interested in extremes of good and evil but in degrees of right and wrong: she has a

---

[1]In a recent article, Lesley Willis argues the opposite, saying that in fact most commentators ignore her Christianity. See "Religion in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park", English Studies in Canada X111, (March 1987) 65-78. For the record, here is a list of some of those who believe her Christianity to be fundamental to our understanding of her as a moralist: Richard Whately, Lionel Trilling, Alisdair MacIntyre, Raymond Williams, Wayne Booth, Marilyn Butler, Norman Page, C.S.Lewis, Rueben Brower, and John Odmark. Willis' evidence for the centrality of Christianity in Austen is not very convincing. She seems to believe that because Austen has her characters utter oaths with "God" in them, this is "an affirmation of the fundamental importance of God in Jane Austen's fictional world" (68).

[2]"The key to Jane Austen's fortune with posterity has been in part the extraordinary grace of her facility, in fact of her unconsciousness: as if, at the most, for difficulty, for embarrassment, she sometimes over her workbasket, her tapestry flowers, in her spare, cool drawing room of other days, fell a-musing, lapsed too metaphorically...into wool gathering, and her dropped stitches, of these pardonable, of these precious moments, were afterwards picked up as little touches of human truth ". "The Lesson of Balzac" in The Future of the Novel ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage, 1956) 100-101.

wine taster's technique of moral discrimination rather than a Calvinist's damned/saved morality. He says that she was a moralist in a "thick" rather than "thin" sense; she shows in her work "a deep interest in theoretical questions about human nature and human conduct".[3] In the "thin" sense, a moralist shows only the ways and mores of a particular group of characters without introducing the possibility that their activities can be generalized. In the "thick" sense, a moralist portrays characters who represent through their activities general tendencies in human conduct. By emphasizing what constitutes *human* conduct, I hope to show that morality for Austen was essentially a secular activity, that moral fulfillment could be achieved independently of religious salvation. Her virtuous characters represent the possibility of fulfillment but are also seen to have typical human needs and weaknesses. They are not iconic as Christ is in the Scriptures; their position as exemplary figures is complicated by an antagonism between the demands of ethical and realistic content. Christ embodies the virtues in a way fictional characters could never do realistically; he is doctrine in the flesh, and he is rarely allowed in the scriptures to display a human side, except perhaps in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here he displays a characteristic human weakness because he appears for a moment to fear death; but we see little of Christ in this position--actually facing what we could recognize as a human dilemma. Christ is a far more effective messenger than abstract doctrine alone because he is "flesh", is seen to live the doctrine he represents; nevertheless, his effect does not rest on his stepping outside of his exemplary role to appear human. In realistic fiction, a character cannot appear to embody doctrine to such an extent or the realistic effect is lost. For this reason we will speak of a tension in Austen's work between realism and the presentation of her ideals.

Ryle's intuition that Austen's characters are not extremes but shades of difference creates the best theoretical framework from which to approach the novels. It allows us to treat her both as a theorist of human nature as well as a conscious artist and to note how her artistry manages her theory. Ryle, though, was not the first commentator to connect Austen with Aristotle. In an 1821 essay, the rhetorician Richard Whately says: "We do not know

---

[3] "Jane Austen and the Moralists" in English Literature and British Philosophy, ed. S.P. Rosenbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) 168.

whether Miss Austin ever had access to the precepts of Aristotle; but there are few, if any, writers of fiction who have illustrated them more successfully".[4] In the course of this work I will explore the connection between Austen and Aristotle in more detail than either Whately or Ryle have done, but by examining textual rather than historical evidence. The plain truth is, as both Ryle and Whately say, we just do not know whether Austen read Aristotle himself. She was familiar with Augustan neoclassicism and her Aristotelianism was probably shaped by her knowledge of that movement, especially through her reading of Samuel Johnson. However, while Johnson was an important influence, my primary aim is to go back to the original source and uncover parallels between Austen's novels and Aristotle's moral and aesthetic theory.

The three primary qualities that emerge from an Aristotelian examination of Austen's work are its realistic element, its moral content, and its aesthetic structure. Our inquiry will observe how these three elements operate in five of the major novels. Starting with a general overview of Aristotle's ethical theory, with special attention to the role of the virtues, we will proceed to distinguish in Austen's work two types of virtue: virtues of manner and virtues of character. An initial distinction between the two types of virtue is that the first pertains to public behaviour and the second to the actual state of the soul. However, in the final chapter we will see that a strong connection exists between manners and character, which accords with Aristotle's notion of the operation of soul and body. Bodily action is an expression of the soul in so far as the body's form is the outcome of the soul's desire to achieve the good. Thus, there is a complex interaction between outer and inner, and the final end is an activity, not a state of mind. In the Aristotelian tradition, the good life is activity which is itself an end, and such activity can be imitated in fiction by devising a plot which is constituted by the action of characters and which has as its end the resolution of the conflicts that have been its mechanism. This theory of plot is derived from Aristotle's Poetics and is designed primarily to illustrate the laws of tragedy. Aristotle considered tragedy to be a model for literature, but it would be a mistake to think that, because of Aristotle's influence, Austen wrote novels with

[4]Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage ed. B.C. Southam (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) 96.

Greek tragedy in mind. She adopts and utilizes a general theory of plot to write her novels, and this is what gives them their dramatic quality.

Aristotle's prescriptions for tragedy are applicable to the novel because they are meant by him to apply to other genres as well. Hence he praises Homer for being the only writer of epics to achieve cohesiveness of plot. Yet while Homer appears to follow the laws of *literature*, he does not follow the laws of tragedy--he does not, for example, attempt to create pity and fear. Thus the laws of tragedy in the Poetics should be distinguished from the laws of literature. The requirement that tragedy create pity and fear is a requirement for that genre alone; the law of plot development applies to drama and narrative fiction alike. Austen follows Aristotelian laws of plot construction; she is a realist in the classical sense that her plots follow laws of probability. She is also a realist, partially but not wholly, in the sense mentioned by Ian Watt, that her characters appear to be individualized.[3] This effect is achieved primarily by giving characters proper names instead of type names--Tom Jones instead of Mr Badman. According to Watt, characters in the novel operate in specific time and place and are thus individualized: the novelist is unconcerned with the universal, only with depicting the particular. Moreover, he says, the particular cannot adequately serve as a vehicle for representing the universal. Yet Watt's criterion for individualising characters is already written into the classical aesthetic. Aristotle says in the Poetics that the author should aim to represent a type of character "though at the same time he attaches the names of specific persons to the types" (*Poetics*, 32). In the classical aesthetic, characters are individualized and operate in a specific time and place, but they also represent the universal. This is possible in Aristotelian thought because the moral life is a life of action and because someone who lives the moral life is exemplifying it. When moral action is imitated in fiction, it is given cohesiveness by being made a necessary part of the plot, which forms the action of the work as a unit.

The plot achieves unity if each significant action contributes towards its unravelling and seems to follow from what went before. For Aristotle, this type of cohesion, which he

---

[3]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1957) 9-37.

calls probability and necessity, is the most important type of realistic effect. Significantly Whately praises Austen because her plots have probability. He distinguishes the unnatural and the improbable in the novel, the former occurring when things happen contrary to human nature, and the latter when things happen against likely odds, where there is "an overbalance of chance".[6] Fielding, for example, includes the improbable, but not the unnatural; indeed, all novelists of genius avoid the unnatural. Austen follows Aristotle's requirement that a plot be drawn emphasizing the probabilities of a certain outcome given a certain situation: given x, y will be shown to generally follow. According to Whately, a plot should present

> the general instead of the particular,--the probable instead of the true. And by leaving out those accidental regularities, and exceptions to general rules, which constitute the many improbabilities of real narrative, present us with a clear and *abstracted* [his emphasis] view of general rules themselves; and thus concentrate, as it were, into a small compass, the result of wide experience.[7]

Events are organized according to probability, not just to achieve a realistic effect, but to arrange things so that right and wrong meet their just deserts through a necessary causal sequence rather than through a series of accidents. Whately argues that Austen's novels bear to reality the same relationship that Aristotle contended poetry ought to bear to history: both select so as to render what is imitated general. Events therefore proceed according to our sense of poetic justice and do not always allow for the caprices of real life.

As chance plays a part in real life, there must be an anti-realism present at the same time that the ordinary is depicted. Whately intimates the need for this parallel anti-realism when he says that the careful organization of Austen's novels is "produced by a sacrifice of probability: yet they have little or nothing which is not probable."[8] Although Whately does not clearly bring out the point, his essay suggests that Austen's novels are both natural in showing characteristic human behaviour and probable in showing events which are likely to happen. They become improbable (not true to life) only to the extent that they ignore the

---

[6] Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 90.
[7] Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 93.
[8] Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage, 95.

irregularities of life in allowing events to fall together in a probable sequence. A novelist can allow partially for the irregularities of life by having the sequence of events in his work *probable* rather than *necessary*. So one event will follow another as a likely but not necessary outcome.

Even though the unrealistic element of organization is not true to life, it does not mean that the *effect* of organization is unrealistic, or that readers may not believe in the story's plausibility because organization does not allow for the part normally played in life by accident. The effect of plausibility in fiction is in part a trick, although not a trick intended as a piece of duplicity but an attempt to play on illogical associations. Aristotle specifically mentions this trick in the Poetics when he speaks of the necessary element of illusion which makes the impossible seem reasonable: "A sequence of events which, though actually impossible, looks reasonable should be preferred by the poet to what, though really possible, seems incredible" (*Poetics*, 80). This is akin to Whately's point about Austen, except that in her case it is the improbable that seems reasonable. A poet must tell lies by skill, and he does this by exploiting our tendency to make false logical moves. People suppose that if B must exist whenever A exists, then B's existence is grounds for asserting A's existence (that is, "the tree sways whenever it is windy; the tree sways; therefore it is windy" is a fallacy because something else could be making the tree sway). According to Aristotle, something like this happens when we read fiction: the author creates a groundwork of assumptions (his conceptual scheme) and makes certain things consequent on that. He creates the illusion that because the consequents happen, the frame must be true. When the causal link is upheld by the author, the events seem probable. Austen frequently employs this method of creating illusion to the point where she has been accused of manipulating the plot to secure a favourable outcome for the characters who best represent her conceptual scheme. Thus she creates a conceptual framework, "only marry for love" let us say. She then makes certain characters act according to that principle, and in return she rewards them at the end with happiness in marriage. Thus when she affirms the consequent (Elizabeth Bennet marries Darcy), we are invited to affirm by the consequent the antecedent moral principle. It might

be quite improbable by real-life standards that Mr Darcy, having been rejected once, would try again; and it might be improbable that a woman in Elizabeth's situation, however noble her sentiments, would refuse such a one as Darcy. But both actions are quite consistent with Austen's general moral principle of organization that virtue will be rewarded.

At the same time that the organization is strict, there will also be those actions which fall into the general realm of probability and which are motivated by considerations outside the author's conceptual scheme. This helps provide a contrast between ordinary life and the life of heightened moral awareness governed by Austen's scheme, but it is also an acknowledgement of the independence of the real. In the early part of Pride and Prejudice, for example, Charlotte Lucas refers to Jane Bennet's reserved manners as an imposition on the public. She means that Jane's reserve is calculated to win her admirers (*PP*, 17). We learn in the course of the novel that Charlotte is entirely wrong about Jane being reserved by design. However, the important point is that Charlotte judges Jane by her own understanding of human nature. Charlotte is a pragmatist, and she feels that everyone else is secretly a pragmatist, but that they devise ways of concealing the fact in public. To Charlotte "Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance" (*PP*, 18) because each partner is essentially self-seeking, and harmony will occur only if the self-seeking of each can be made compatible. Now, in Austen's conceptual framework this attitude is extremely debilitating, yet it is given an articulate voice in Charlotte. To Austen, Charlotte's marriage to Collins is punishment for having an attitude that will deny her true happiness. To Charlotte, however, the marriage is satisfactory because it will afford her as much happiness (compatibility) as she could find with any man. The way Charlotte's views are presented makes them understandable, and we are able to judge them from within the framework of the novel and also independently as we might judge a real person. Charlotte is not merely functional: she is given enough life, enough independence from the framework, to make her attitude intelligible and even perhaps appealing to some. It is useful to remember also that Charlotte represents the dire situation of a single woman in Austen's time with little money and without much hope of making an eligible match. The alternative to marrying Collins is being a burden on

her family or being a governess. From this historical point of view she may excite our sympathy, but from the conceptual framework of the book she can excite only our sorrow that she has married a fool and denied herself the possibility of true happiness in marriage, the happiness that comes from mutual respect and esteem. The example of Charlotte is one of the rough edges or complications in Austen's conceptual scheme. Other examples are the attractiveness of Marianne in Sense and Sensibility and the charm of Henry and Mary Crawford in Mansfield Park. Each of these characters provides an attractive alternative to Austen's ethical system, and sometimes they make her exemplary characters appear stolid. Such complications enhance the realistic effect because they make less obtrusive the mechanics of conceptual control.

Conceptual control can therefore be seen as having an antagonistic relationship with the realistic particulars of a work. William Edinger observes that the tension between realistic effect and the conceptual scheme consists of a difference between the inductive logic of probability and the deductive logic of exemplification:

> When realistic particulars are wholly mastered by a single conceptual scheme they appear "contrived", for to the extent that they do seem realistic they assert their autonomous right to the reader's attention, demanding in effect to be considered as the ground of a moral significance which arises from them inductively, and thus denying their exemplary function. The conflict, in short, is between the inductive logic of probability and the deductive logic of exemplification; and when the probability of the fiction is sufficiently compelling, the conflict appears to the reader in the light of an inductive fallacy: the fictional "example" does not (and of course cannot) "prove" the truth of the formula, which is then seen as an inadequate summary of the fiction.[9]

Although the inductive process of evaluation is less secure than the deductive, it is more challenging and informative. For the deductive method has already built into it its evaluative answers, whereas the inductive method allows us to assess the circumstances independently as

[9] William Edinger, Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) 60.

well as in light of the judgement it gradually reaches. We can see this difference operating in deductive and inductive syllogisms. The deductive syllogism begins with a general statement and concludes by repeating the predicate in its premise, this time attached to a particular (All men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal). We do not have to refer to the world to discover the truth of this syllogism because it is evident in the terms it employs. The inductive syllogism begins with facts about the world and then draws its conclusion.

The inductive method is important for moral writing because the particular stands as the test of validity for the ethical judgement. Edinger says

> in moral writing the circumstances must be kept in as full a view as possible because they are the test as well as the source of a writer's concepts, whose adequacy can only be measured against the reader's independent view of the facts. In deductive writing, where the examples are "alleged for the discourse's sake", no such test can be applied. The meaning of the particulars is predetermined, and the question, what guarantees the validity of the author's governing concepts? cannot be answered by the work itself.[10]

Deductive writing, by not appealing to the independent world of facts, thereby relativizes its claims even though in form it seems absolute. Arguably it is because of the problematic tension existing in inductive arguments that we can call it objective. The use of inductive processes in fiction illustrates this well, for in submitting to objective reality the author relinquishes a degree of conceptual control and thereby allows events to assume a logic of their own. One might call this, rather clumsily, "derelativizing" because it distances fictional events from the particular individual ultimately responsible for their creation. Deductive literature is "conceptually overdetermined", and Edinger contrasts its conceptual bias with the perceptual bias of realism, a perceptual bias that gives us more of the texture of life. The question of whether perception can be conveyed without conceptualizing is difficult to answer, and it is a matter of contention whether any use of language is an intentional use in the sense that of necessity it selects and chooses. Even an inductive process of argument will select and

[10] Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style, 61.

choose its particulars because it has already an eye to its final judgement regardless of whether that judgement is made specific. Also, it is essential to remember that whatever is conventional in realism is not mere convention, but is used to create an effect, be it moral, aesthetic or realistic. So even granting that we may be confined by language, realism points away from its confinement rather than rejoices in it.

Given a conflict between arrangement according to conceptual apparatus and creation of a realistic effect, theoretically-minded novelists are divided over which should be given priority.[11] Two novelists whose comments appear to echo the conviction that the effect of realism should be the novelist's first priority are Henry James and Joseph Conrad. Neither says, however, that realism leaves imitation at the level of subjective particularity; rather, creating a realistic effect is a first step towards engaging the reader in a cohesive moral view. James acknowledges that the impression of life is an illusion, and he says that "the air of reality seems to me the supreme virtue of the novel".[12] James believes that destroying the illusion involves a predilection from within the novel's structure for emphasizing that it is "only fiction" and this implies an apology for the art. While deploring the tendency to expose novelistic convention, he goes so far as to say that any rearrangement of life involves a mechanistic attitude towards the novel: "In proportion...as we see life *without* rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it *with* arrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, a compromise and convention".[13] When James says in the next breath that art must be selective in order to be inclusive, he tacitly ackowledges that discrete arrangement preserves both the effect of realism and the informing mind behind the work. He believes that the novelist who emphasizes technique in his work betrays his art because it absolves him from conveying the texture of life--its surface as well as its substance. Handled with skill, sensitivity, knowledge and understanding by someone who has *lived*, the portrayal of life's surface allows the reader direct sensual apprehension of the

---

[11]For the comments of novelists on realism, see Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966) 59-80

[12]Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" in The Future of the Novel ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956) 14.

[13]"The Art of Fiction", 20.

scene depicted. As James puts it: "it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations".[14] For James the texture of life is not an aesthetic end in itself; it is a means of invigorating the conceptual apparatus of the fiction.

The task of the novelist, then, is to recreate through the awareness of his characters or through the awareness of the narrator our known impression of reality (our "ordinary understanding") invigorated by the particular perceptions of the comprehending mind. Thus we get the immediacy of a particular mind's understanding and an attempt to reach others by transcending the potential subjectivity of such impressions. James likens the novel to a painting: both forms attempt "to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle".[15] Capturing the "substance" from the surface matters because we are after not an unmediated realism (if such a thing were possible), but a realism in which the sensual impression conveyed by the texture of reality leads to or is the foundation of a comprehending idea of reality. In the novels of James and Conrad, sensory perception is prior as a foundation of comprehension, and their readers are allowed a pristine sense of the pure act of perception. Reality as perceived reality (its texture that creates impressions on our minds) is prior to the idea of it which we have. Reality imposes itself on our minds--our ideas or preconceptions influence our perception of it, but we cannot eliminate the actual being of the thing perceived. When we refer to the actual being of a thing, we are using language denotatively, and we are allowing the perceptual effect created by denotative language priority over its possible conceptual meaning. Roughly speaking, the perceptual effect puts us in touch with how things are; conceptual meaning puts us in touch with what the author wants us to see. The author's total conceptual meaning is his conceptual scheme, and the more the scheme owes to denotation, the less intrusive it tends to be on the way the reader comes to understand the scheme.

The priority of denotation is temporal only, but it has the power to unfold to us gradually a conceptual scheme. In the novel, if the conceptual scheme overwhelms the sensory

[14]Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", 12.
[15]"The Art of Fiction, 247.

recreation of reality, we no longer have realism. When we can actually sense, albeit through the sheer power of the word, a recreated world, we have our way into that world. This is perhaps why Conrad, at least in his criticism, wants to limit the effect of his work to the sensory: "That and no more, and it is everything". Before saying this in his preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, he says:

> All art, therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions...it is only through an unremitting never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and that light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.[16]

Paradoxically this response is conveyed by words but is also prelinguistic, for we manage fleetingly to relive the origins of our knowledge, origins which have been forgotten because we are shaping and ordering perceivers: we fit things to our purposes, ignoring the sensate relationship with the world on which our ordering process is found. In a subsequent enigmatic passage from the same preface, Conrad writes: "The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood".[17] The phrases "without choice" and "sincere mood" strike a particular chord. It is not through choice, not through preconception, that the novelist holds up in his work an evanescent glimpse of the truth of things; it is, rather, the result of a profound and sincere conviction of how things are, how they must be. A "sincere mood" is one in which the artist faces the truth, not through any will of his own, but because he must. The artist who does this is not a subjectivist; he cannot argue truth out of existence by a conscious choice. Once this fidelity to life is achieved, the writer is free to choose his form. The commitment to life and truth is therefore a restriction on overconceptualizing the

---

[16]Joseph Conrad, "Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus" in Three Great Tales of Joseph Conrad (New York: Vintage Books, no date) ix.
[17] "Preface", x.

novel, but it does not mean that the author withholds control. Even the naturalist Zola admits that the novelist is a "scientific observer" of reality only in the preliminary inspirational stages of composition.[18] The novelist must try to achieve through the representation of the particular the possibility of generalizing about human nature.

The novelist starts with particulars, but he uses his creative powers to arrange them into a meaningful sequence corresponding to his perception of the facts. To restrict himself to particularity would be to deny the possibility of control by which he makes his idea of reality felt. Any attempt to restrict art to particularity betrays not a commitment to life, but a covert alliance with materialistic philosophy. Kenneth Burke imagines a naturalistic novel which has as its motivating force the idea that setting ("scene" in his terms) has an overwhelming effect on character, requiring that "the brutalizing situation contain brutalized characters."

> And thereby, in his humanitarian zeal to save mankind, the novelist portrays characters which, in being as brutal as their scene, are not worth saving. We could phrase this dilemma in another way: our novelist points up his thesis by too narrow a conception of scene as the motive force behind his characters; and this restricting of the scene calls in turn for a corresponding restriction upon personality or role. [19]

This restrictive tendency in the naturalistic novel has its analogue in materialist philosophy. The materialist, in overestimating the influence of the material world on human motives, makes human action seem too much like a mere mechanical response to outside stimuli. The motivating power of the mind--of ideas--is virtually ignored or undergoes reduction. Extreme idealism on the other hand overestimates the motivating power of ideas at the expense of material reality. Burke realizes that there has been an overwhelming tendency (perhaps of necessity) that philosophical systems operate from different views of substance. Thus for materialism, substance is matter, and for idealism substance is ideas. The presence of substance lends clarity and foundation to the system, but it inevitably involves reductionism.

---

[18] "We start, indeed, from the true facts, which are our indestructible basis; but to show the mechanism of these facts it is necessary for us to produce and direct the phenomena" (Novelists on the Novel, 70).

[19] Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969) 9.

Some materialists reduce all mental activity to brain states, so that "ideas" are merely mechanical responses to external stimuli on the brain. If this were the human condition, Wordsworthian romanticism would be justified in viewing the purpose of art as exciting other minds into a sympathetic response to the poet's. The stimulus-response view of life impoverishes the concept of personhood because it overstates the extent to which our understanding is determined by automatic reactions to outside stimuli; and, when used as a justification for art, this view impoverishes the concept of sympathy, seeing it not as intellectual kinship but as psychological identification.[20] While an author recreates the texture of life by directly imitating the perceiving mind and how that mind creates its reality, he can also contrast the particular perceptions of an individual mind with an ideal, and by doing this liberate the work from mere particularity. To achieve this liberation, a novel needs an ethical element which takes the ideal as its goal, and it needs an intellectual element which can provide a generalizing power whereby the particulars of the work can be associated with general tendencies in human nature.

A problem connected with generalizing from particular examples--a problem raised by the new critics--is that expression of generalizations is inartistic. This is because generalizations are abstracted from the particular, and the particular is a concrete image which allows us a sensual and hence aesthetic experience. The generalization cannot be rooted in immediate sense experience and must be rendered by explicit statement. The new critics protest that explicit statement is inartistic, and add to this protest the claim that no ideas should be clearly stated in literature. In The Well Wrought Urn, for example, Cleanth Brooks argues that poetry cannot be reduced to its propositional content, but he goes on to claim that statements in poetry are always tentative and equivocal. Brooks' point is that statement and figures compete by their very nature and can never co-operate; we can come close to outline what a poem says only "if we make enough reservations and qualifications, thus attempting to come nearer to the meaning of the poem by successive approximations and refinements".[21] On this view, we come closer to the true meaning of the poem only if in assessing it we use

[20] I offer a critique of literary identification in the conclusion.
[21] Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn New York: Harvest Books, 1947) 206.

figures similar to the ones it uses, which amounts in the end to simply repeating what the poem says. Brooks argues that the symbol conveys symbolic truth rather than blunt truth: "If we expand the symbol", he cites Wilbur Urban as saying, "we lose the *sense* or value of the symbol as symbol".[22] He overlooks, however, the possible rhetorical function of the symbol: is the symbol always inscrutible or is it sometimes meant to convey condensed messages? The answer would depend on whether the poet is primarily a symbolist or like Yeats, for example, intentionally didactic.[23] Brooks' remarks about the symbol betray an anti-intellectualism which would deem it unnecessary to interpret symbolic language. And for this reason commentary on works which have self-enclosed systems such as Yeats' often substitutes exegesis for criticism.[24] This is implied when Brooks says that we cannot approach symbolic language other than on its own terms. The realistic novel, although shaped and organized in a way the real world can never be, is not self-enclosed because it invites comparison with everyday life; in realistic fiction there is an implied criterion of the real to be met, for the realist will frequently mix references to the real world with his fiction. John Searle comments:

> In part, certain fictional genres are defined by the nonfictional commitments involved in the work of fiction. The difference, say, between naturalistic novels, fairy stories, works of science fiction, and surrealistic stories is in part defined by the extent of the author's commitment to represent actual facts about places like London and Dublin and Russia, or general facts about what is possible for people to do and what the world is like... In the case of realistic or naturalistic fiction, the author will refer to real places and events intermingling these references with the fictional references, thus making it possible to treat the fictional story as an extension of our existing knowledge. [25]

A defining characteristic of realism is the consistency of its fidelity to nature and to the world

---

[22]The Well Wrought Urn, 206.
[23]See Yvor Winters' discussion of Yeats in Forms of Discovery (Chicago: Alan Swallow, 1967) 204-234.
[24]Forms of Discovery, 205.
[25]John Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" in Expression and Meaning (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 72-73.

and the coherence with which it presents the world. A writer of fiction may create any character or event or object he chooses, but if he intends his fictional world to be accepted as realistic, as an extension of our existing knowledge of the world, he must accept the limits of coherence imposed by that world.

Seen in this light, realism is a commitment to natural laws, to scientific laws having common currency, and to moral and social laws. Any of these laws can, of course, be legitimately challenged, but any serious challenge must proceed from an understanding of how existing laws operate and why they have currency. The notion of what can be legitimately challenged is far-reaching, but the stipulation is that criticism must at least address the assumed values of an audience. A writer is not a realist if he merely states subjective preferences which nobody before has seriously entertained. If existing values are not met, the content of a work is imposed and art is reduced to rhetoric and didacticism. There is in didacticism an impatience with ordinary mortals and the implied belief that the author's private opinions carry more weight than the effect of his art. In short, a realist is committed to external coherence as well as to internal coherence, and the presence of external coherence raises the issue of reference that Searle discusses in his paper.

Reference is primarily a philosophical issue, and when the term "reference" is used by a philosopher, it is often to distinguish how language connects with the real world, how it picks out things in the world, from how language can be used to create imaginary objects, characters, and worlds. For critical analysis of fiction, reference to human beings is the central issue because the novelist can make it seem that he is referring to real people which are in fact creations of his imagination. And through the creation of this effect, seeming particulars take on more general significance even though they are not designated as types: that is, they are given proper names, not type names. Reference to a real, existing person is usually performed by using a proper name like John or Mary or Aristotle. In a very simple context, someone may refer to a real John in the sentence "this is John" while at the same time indicating John, who is co-present with a third party. He cannot perform the same operation with a fictional character, Mr Darcy, let us say. He cannot produce Mr Darcy and

refer to him in the same way. When he "refers" to Mr Darcy in some expression like "Mr Darcy marries Elizabeth Bennet", his mode of speech is about fiction, not about the world. In the real-life case, he is performing a quite basic operation which the German philosopher Frege calls "naming". In Frege's view, a particular word like "John" denotes in a given context a unique individual. He contrasts this referential use of language with conceptual use. When I say "John is a man" I am combining a general term or a predicate with a particular: Frege calls this general term a concept. Both concepts and objects are public, unlike ideas and mental images, which are essentially private. Generally speaking, concepts will be predicate expressions: "is a man" in "John is a man" ascribes a predicate to the referent "John". "John" is grammatical subject of the sentence while "is a man" is the subjective complement. "John" picks out or designates the object, "is a man" designates the concept. "Designates" is a problematic term here because it is still a matter of philosophical controversy what concept expressions refer to, or whether they refer at all.[26] The problem is that while "is a man" or rather "man" cannot be the logical subject of a statement, it can be the grammatical subject as in "man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains" or as in "the concept ***happiness*** is empty".

In Frege's view, to be the logical subject of a sentence, the referent must exist, must be a unique, individual thing. Proper names are the paradigm referring expressions, but so too are names like "the cat" for "Felix" or "Plato's pupil" for Aristotle. Just as the predicate term cannot be the logical subject, so the referring expression cannot be the logical predicate, though it can be the grammatical predicate as in "this is Fred" (notice we cannot say, though, "this is a Fred"). What is noticeable about "this is Fred" is that it is not predicating "Fredness" of "this": that is, Fred is not a concept but a referring expression. The difference between concept and object derives from Frege's distinction between "sense" and "reference". He points out by way of illustration that "the morning star" and "the evening star" have the same referent (Venus) but different senses. This is clear when one sees that "the morning star is the evening star" is a statement of identity which conveys information, while "the morning

[26]For a discussion of this question, see John Searle, Speech Acts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 97-103.

star is the morning star" is a tautology. The "sense" is the mode of presenting the object, and the same object can be presented by different senses, providing a necessary extension of the paradigmatic referring process. "The morning star" is a referring expression, an act of naming, but it is already loaded with significance. Now, Frege's view is that the way we refer to an object is to say something true about it. Thus I cannot refer to Aristotle by saying "the teacher of Plato" (unless I have some ironic intent) because I have misconceptualized him. When I substitute "the pupil of Plato" for "Aristotle", I have referred to Aristotle because I have said something true about him. This is the sense in which verifiable existence is a necessary condition for successful reference: whatever does not exist, I cannot refer to because I cannot say anything true about it. There is no possibility that I could verify my statement. Universals or predicates do not exist, therefore, in the same way that particulars exist.

Nevertheless, universals play a crucial role in our language and in our understanding, for there could not be a grammatical language as we know it if universals did not have both a grammatical and a conceptual function. If we speak in Frege's terms about concepts and we admit that concepts cannot be subject terms, what do we say about the grammaticalness of statements like "the concept *happiness* is empty"?[27] The question leads us back to Mr Darcy, for although Mr Darcy is not a physical object, we can use his name as the subject of a

[27]On this point, Searle argues that while "the concept happiness" can be a grammatical subject, it cannot be a grammatical predicate as in "X is the concept horse". He shows that in Frege's writings there is an equivocation over the use of the word "concept". Frege wanted it to mean "property" so that "refer to a concept" means "refer to a property"; he also wanted "refer to a concept" to mean "ascribe a property by using a grammatical predicate". As Searle argues, I can ascribe a property (e.g. "has hooves") without referring to a concept (e.g. "horseness"). "The expression *the property horseness* is not", he says, "used to ascribe a property, rather it is used to refer to a property" (Speech Acts, 101). Analagously, when "Mr Darcy" is the grammatical subject of a sentence in Pride and Prejudice, it is not used to ascribe a property to an object but to refer to a concept which is a set of properties. Saying that "Mr Darcy" is shorthand for "the concept Mr Darcy" is also justified by recent studies in semantics, called case grammar, where nouns are seen as conflations of predicate expressions. Thus "boy" is shorthand for "that which is young and male". Case grammar shows that surface structure can conceal linguistic operations working underneath, and this allows an author to use surface structure to create impressions not logically justified by the grammar.

sentence and we can also verify statements about him by consulting the text of Pride and Prejudice. Searle argues that when we refer to fictional characters we commit ourselves to the truth that they "exist in fiction", but not to the view that there is a separate realm of being called "fiction". This is primarily because it would be conceptually impossible to admit into Pride and Prejudice as we know it elements that might appear in a work of science fiction. Some fictional works allow and play on cross reference, but realistic fiction precludes this possibility by its commitment to natural laws. So when Jane Austen uses "Mr Darcy" in her novel as the subject of a sentence, her use is analagous to the way we can use "the concept *happiness*" in real-world talk. Therefore, "Mr Darcy" in fictional talk is a shorthand for "the concept Mr Darcy". Because we can treat "Mr Darcy" as the grammatical subject of a sentence, we can also imagine him (consciously or not) to be a logical subject. We can treat him as if he were a real person, while at the same time he can be used by the author as a device which enhances the conceptual scheme. The hallmark of realists is that they conceal as much as possible the character's function so that the reader can treat him as a real person.

Through Frege's theory it is possible to articulate the relationship between the particular and the universal. He defines particularity and the concepts we attach to particulars as constituting our objective knowledge of the world. Concepts are not private ideas or mental images; they are thoughts which potentially many people can share. He defines a thought as "something for which the question of truth arises". Truth cannot be ascribed to sense impressions because there is no possibility of comparing one sense impression with another. Two impressions, of red for example, can only be compared if there is something "out there" which has the property "red". "It is quite incredible", says Frege, "that I should really have only my inner world instead of the whole environment, in which I am supposed to move and act".[21] Now it might be assumed that because no true statement can be made about Mr Darcy in the sense described by Frege, nothing true can be said of Mr Darcy, that statements about him are conceptually void. As we have seen though, Mr Darcy does exist in the sense that true things can be said of him because he exists in Pride and Prejudice and that is the source we

[21]Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" in The Philosophy of Logic, ed. P.Strawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) 30.

consult to verify our statements about him. This point becomes clearer if we imagine that the historical Napoleon made an unlikely entrance into the novel and ended up marrying Elizabeth. The statement "Napoleon marries Elizabeth" would then be true for Pride and Prejudice, but false as a statement about the world of the past. So a fictional text can refer to the real world, but it can also establish its own set of references, not to things, but to concepts. And this is where we find in fiction the combination of the universal and the particular. The combination is not only of the real and the universal, but also of the imagined real and the universal.

The effectiveness of the referential use of language is that it provides the necessary degree of illusion for the realistic effect to work, and not just for specific subject matters: as Ian Watt remarks, a novel's realism "does not reside in the kind of life it presents, but in the way it presents it".[29] Watt points to the way the realistic novel individualizes its characters, and thereby creates the illusion of realism--"a pleasant deceit", as Locke puts it. The issue here is not to confuse realism with the portrayal of the seamy side of life, but to establish a method of realistic portrayal. The particular setting of the novel is important only in so far as it enhances its overall effect, although it should be said that the low-life setting of some early novels is of historical significance since low-life had rarely before been a subject for literature. The method involves using a high degree of referential language, and referential use became a defining characteristic of realism. Watt says: "the novel is supposed to be a full and authentic report of human experience, and is therefore under the obligation to satisfy its readers with such details of the story...which are presented through a more largely referential use of language than is common in other literary forms".[30] That the fictional use of referential terms is analogous to, but not the same as, referring in the Fregian sense, is evident when Watt proceeds to point out that realism in fiction is, after all, a convention and is not bound to be truer to life than other forms. This is a necessary concession to make, for the commitment to truth is made by the author and is not an inherent quality of the form he uses. A writer can use realistic techniques to distort and falsify.

---

[29]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel(Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1957) 11.
[30]The Rise of the Novel, 35

But the possibility of distortion is not the same thing as the creation of the "pleasurable deceit", the illusion of realism. Here the writer exploits our ability to treat a concept as the grammatical subject of a sentence which purports to contain an actual truth value. The extent to which this illusion works on us is the extent to which we can treat statements about fictional characters and events as if they were objective statements of truth independent of the conceptual scheme laid out by the author. This means, as far as characters go, that we are able to judge them as we would a person in real life. To achieve this effect, the author must as much as possible conceal the way the character plays a role in his conceptual scheme. Where the conceptual scheme is strong, as in Austen, the means used to create the effect of concealing conceptual interference (such as transferring judgement from narrator to a character) must be as unobtrusive as possible.

Austen's subtlety of presentation indicates her desire to incorporate moral values into her art. She is not didactic; her work is not matter plus ornament, but shows her to be a realist who is at the same time committed to a neoclassical view of character. Classicism is not antithetical to realism but demands a higher degree of conceptual control of character than we usually find in realism. This degree of control should not be confused with didacticism; Austen is a moralist, but for the most part she resists overt preaching, even though she tells us in the letters that it was a great temptation to lecture.[31] It is true that her work involves explicit judgement, but she does not leave the impression that she believes moral precepts are best relayed by simple instruction. For one thing, her work does not appeal only to reason; it is not argumentative in the way an ethical treatise usually is. It appeals as well to the senses and the emotions, albeit to the aesthetic sense rather than the animal senses and to the ethical emotions rather than to sentiment itself. In common with all realistic works, the full effect of Austen's novels is not directly felt. A reader is not always conscious of realism's effect even if he is conscious of its overt message. There is usually a gap between the transmission of the message and its moral effect. That is, there may be a gap between the transmission of the message and whatever moral change (either in heart or in practice) it causes the reader to

[31] Jane Austen: Selected Letters, ed. R.W.Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) 134.

have. Generally, the effect is reinforcement, not persuasion; it is "epedeictic" because it reinforces values already held by the reader.

This reinforcement appeals to the reader's independent view of the facts, and it allows the conceptual machinery of the novel to be judged by the reader's conventional understanding of human nature. Those critics who believe that Austen denies them this ability, who see, for instance, her characters as too functional, have already made the assessment that she is to be judged by realistic standards. The same criticism would be irrelevant if applied to The Faerie Queen or to a pastoral poem. The realist assumes that, while disagreements exist, there are also areas of agreement about what life is like, what motivates people, what people hate and love, what makes them happy or sad, what contributes to social cohesion, what makes life tolerable or unbearable, and so on.

## II. Virtue, Reason and Emotion

If Austen creates the ethical structure of her novels under the influence of Aristotle rather than Christianity, a preliminary account of Christian virtues will help distinguish them from those recognized by Aristotle. Austen is primarily concerned to promote secular virtues notwithstanding her private Christian beliefs; as will be argued later, one reason for the apparent neglect of matters of faith in her novels is the unsuitability of theological issues to fiction. This is the aesthetic reason. The moral reason is that the virtues depicted by Austen are secular and are independent of the "theological" virtues, faith, hope and charity, in a way that the cardinal or natural virtues in Christian belief cannot be. What we preceive as constituting virtuous activity in Austen's novels does not rely on our having the feeling that her moral agents have religious sensibility; it relies on our perception of their character. Character underlies activity, which in Austen's novels is generally mannered activity where characters behave in a social situation. There ought to be, although there not always is, a causal relationship between character and manners so that judgements about character can be made on the basis of manners. Because Austen's emphasis is on social relationships, her characters never seek spiritual rewards outside of the social sphere. They achieve spiritual fulfillment within the community: in marriage and in friendship.

The religious needs of Austen's characters are muted and overshadowed by needs connected with marriage and friendship, primarily the need to belong to a group of like-minded people. For in marrying, her main characters are not isolated from their friends, and Austen wishes us to see perfect happiness in this outcome. The Christian view that our relationships with others are bound to our relationship with God is quite different, and there appears to be an irresolvable difficulty in a view which insists that two wholly separate types of relationship can be informed by the same principle. To take the theological virtue of "charity" as an example, we find some equivocation in the New Testament as to how this term should be understood. We know from St.Paul that charity is the greatest of the theological virtues, but is it strictly speaking a virtue which bears on our relationship with God? Paul uses it in the sense of love of neighbour, but he also believes that it is inspired by

our knowledge of God's love. In 2 Thessalonians 1:3 he says: " your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing". Are we to take it that there is a causal relationship between faith and love, or that both virtues are growing ...ependently? And is the answer to this question a matter of interpretation or must the causal connection be assumed fundamental to Christian belief? The liberal answer is that virtue is possible without faith, the conservative's that "charity is to be prized only if there is a God: otherwise it is a pathetic delusion".[32] The conservative argument is that without the mediation of God's love, charity leads to idolatory. There is, on this view, a need for human beings to love something higher than themselves, and the only legitimate outlet is worship of God or of Christ as God's son. Christ is a legitimate object of worship only if the worshipper believes that he is the son of God. The vision of Christ's body is a way of knowing God in the flesh because Christ is part of the trinity, and it follows, according to Peter Geach, that "faith in Christ is a pure absurdity unless the believer is convinced that what he himself believes by faith, Christ simply knew".[33] Christ himself, that is, cannot possess the virtues of faith and hope because he possesses knowledge.

The liberal view makes matters of faith contingent upon earthly virtue. John, for example, says "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (4:20). Failure to love one's fellow man *ipso facto* may mean failure to love God. This psychological insight accords with the need just mentioned to love God *in the flesh* through love of the human figure of Christ: there is a psychological need to love something tangible. But the two kinds of love cannot be spoken of in the same terms. "Charity" or *caritas* is brotherly love unaffected by sexual interest or self-interest; love of God, on the other hand, is love of the divine. It makes sense to say that we can love another human being altruistically and without sexual interest, but it does not make sense to say that we love God without these interests: the question does not arise. Moreover, we might expect our love for another human being, if reciprocated, to be the basis of friendship. But it is absurd to believe that love of God could be a basis of winning God's friendship. If the two types of love are

[32]Peter Geach, The Virtues (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) 17.
[33]The Virtues, 70

different, they fulfill different needs, and the conservative is incorrect to believe that one type of need (to love God) if unfulfilled spills over into the other type (to love others) and becomes idolatrous.

In Austen's novels there is an implicit rejection of the conservative Christian view that love between human beings needs to be mediated by love of God. Austen was aware of the temptation to idolatory in portraying Marianne's love for Willoughby. But Marianne's love is not idolatrous because unmediated by love of God; her idolatory is a fantasy conjured by self-love. She creates an erroneous image of Willoughby and is unable to penetrate the image /to recognize his true self. Recognizing someone's true self, what lies behind mannered appearance, and finding there a kindred spirit is essential to Austen's notion of love. It also guards against idolatory because it is absurd to worship an equal. Acknowledgement of a kindred spirit should lead to friendship based on equality and mutual respect.

Austen's commitment in her novels to a secular view of virtue and friendship is the clue to her Aristotelianism. She uses Aristotle's ethical theory in her novels to develop three principal themes: the notion of virtue, the role of reason and emotion in leading a virtuous life, and finally the notion of equilibrium a community attains when it collectively upholds the virtues. The latter theme will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter Three, but some preliminary remarks about Aristotle's notions of friendship and political life will help clarify his theory of the virtues.[34]

According to Aristotle, "the perfect form of friendship is that between good men who are alike in excellence or virtue" (*NE*, 219). When Aristotle proceeds to speak of friendship as being based on good will, it becomes apparent how different are the terms of friendship from the terms of religious love. As Geach, who represents the conservative view, acknowledges: "A friend of God will no doubt have such an excess of joy when he thinks of God; but the unchangeable God cannot be said to have an excess of joy from thinking anew of his friends".[35] People can expect to be friends only with their equals; an inferior person

[34]In Chapters Two and Three, where I discuss the virtues in Austen's novels, I will refer back to key concepts of Aristotle's theory outlined in this chapter.
[35] The Virtues, 71.

cannot expect to be friends with the great and wise or expect the great and wise to be able to derive any pleasure from his friendship. Friendship as equality is crucial for both Austen and Aristotle because it underlies the system of social cohesion wherein virtue can flourish: a system where friends mirror each other, not narcissistically but by mutual recognition of virtue. Just as Austen has her virtuous characters form a community of friends, so Aristotle sees the polis ideally as a community of friends, or groups of friends--both friends who live together (for example, husband and wife) and "civic" friends, those bonded by good will rather than intimacy.[36]

Aristotle's account of friends as civic partners presupposes a relationship between ethics and politics, and he embraces such an assumption at the end of the Nicomachean Ethics.[37] The political system provides the essential social conditions in which virtue can be realized; thus there is a close connection between social conditions and the practice of virtue. In Jane Austen's fiction, the relationship between social conditions and the practice of virtue is problematic because she is committed to a realistic portrayal of the life she knew. That life, however, is not always compatible with the practice of virtue. Her novels not only portray the struggle of virtue to assert itself in the face of corruption, but they also lay the ground on which virtue can flourish. This "laying of the ground" is analagous to Aristotle embracing politics as the ground of ethical practice. So the practical nature of the virtues provides an essential balance to the idealistic and perhaps unprovable assumption behind both Austen's and Aristotle's ethical beliefs that human beings have a proper function, a telos which enables certain action to be called typically *human* action. But while idealistic, the concept of telos is essential to the belief that obligation implies *ought*, that moral authority derives from the force of moral imperatives.

The telos is, therefore, normative, and virtuous activity aims at a good conceived as an ethical rather than a personal end. All human activities for Aristotle aim at an appropriate

---

[36]Richard Bosley advises me that Aristotle views the concept of friendship as an analogy; the state could aspire to be a community of friends, but Aristotle did not consider that such a state would likely occur.

[37]See also Book Six: "One's own good cannot exist without household management nor without a political system" (*NE*, 159).

end, and the end for human beings is happiness. Some activities, while they aim at a good, do so only in relation to a higher good: we eat food, not as an end in itself, but for nourishment (at least, we *should* eat it for nourishment). Within the hierarchy of goods to aim for, some are intrinsically good and some are means to a higher end. "Higher" for Aristotle means that to which rational beings will strive. The higher goals are ones attained by exercising reason. So man *in fact* has goals; his goals *ought to be* the achievement of excellence in each activity according to the dictates of reason.

Aristotle believes that happiness resides in "a certain activity of the soul in conformity to perfect virtue" (*NE*, 29). What constitutes virtue is therefore central to his notion of happiness and hence to his notion of what constitutes ethical life. But virtuous activity, as practised by most people, is not for him primarily intellectual. This is evident from the distinction Aristotle makes between intellectual and moral virtues. The first pertain to theoretical wisdom, intelligence, scientific knowledge, skill, and practical wisdom; the second reflect a person's character. The rational soul, to which the intellectual virtues belong, has reason contained within itself; the irrational soul, to which belong the moral virtues, "listens to reason as one would listen to a father"(*NE, 32*). Practical wisdom differs from other parts of the rational soul in being concerned with action. It differs from skill (*techne* or professional know-how) because "production has an end other than itself, but action has not" (*NE*, 153). Aristotle means by this that the production of a statue, for example, is not in itself an end; the end is the form the statue takes (i.e. the work itself is not an end in itself). On the other hand, action is an end in itself: as we will see, the activity of virtue constitutes happiness and happiness is the end for which men strive. Now thought alone does not have the power to move people to action: "only thought which is directed to some end and is concerned with action can do so" (*NE*, 149). Because practical wisdom is the only intellectual virtue concerned with action, it is the only part of the rational soul that is "consulted" by the irrational part about what action should be taken. Thus moral activity combines practical wisdom and emotion. Emotion is not uninhibited, but must be tempered by the practice of virtue, by habit, for we should not merely acquire a theoretical knowledge of virtue, but we

should actually become good and do good.

Achieving the good ought to be pleasurable, but Aristotle is reluctant to associate happiness with our natural desire to pursue pleasure and avoid pain: his view is not the same as ethical hedonism. Pleasure and pain are feelings which act causally on us. The need for pleasure can make us do base things, and the need to avoid pain can prevent us from acting virtuously. In spite of this, virtue does not reside in freedom from these feelings; it resides in seeking pleasures and avoiding pain in the appropriate circumstances. Pleasure and pain affect only practical wisdom because they obviously do not affect theoretical knowledge, for example, that a triangle has three sides. The virtuous human being cannot be indifferent to pleasure and pain, but for pleasure and pain to be allies of virtous action, the performer must have certain characteristics: he must know what he is doing, he must choose the action for its own sake, and his act must spring from an unchangeable character.

The unchangeable in us is what Aristotle calls our characteristics (as opposed to emotions or capacities); our characteristics enable us to achieve the proper degree of emotion so that our emotional lives are congruent with moral activity. The difference between emotions, capacities and characteristics is that emotions are what we experience when we feel joy, anger, and so on; we also have the *capacity* to feel these emotions, and we attain virtue as a characteristic when we stand in the right relation to the emotions we can and do feel. Virtue or excellence in man will be a characteristic which makes him a good man and allows him to perform his function well. This establishes the connection between a characteristic of the soul and the ability to act; it is no accident that a good man performs his function well because the consistency of his performance makes him a good man, makes him have the characteristic of virtue.

Aristotle is therefore arguing for two points: that a man has a function, which is the attainment of excellence; and when he functions with excellence what he does is also excellent. In other words, virtuous characteristics lead to virtuous action. But the question of how we attain virtue remains. Aristotle's answer is that we must seek the mean, which is the middle point between an excess of performance and a deficiency in it. He distinguishes two types of

mean, an objective one and one relative to ourselves. The objective mean, that external to us, is a mathematical point between two extremes. However, we cannot apply such a point to ourselves because it does not follow that if five apples are too many and one too little, that three is the right amount *for us*. Three may be too little or too much (too little for an athlete, too much for the average man). "Us" here means the average healthy person, and by analogy the mean in relation to virtuous activity is whatever the morally healthy person (that is, one who has practical wisdom) might do. "Thus", says Aristotle, "virtue or excellence...consists in observing a mean relative to us, a mean which is defined by a rational principle, such as a man of practical wisdom" (*NE*, 43). Therefore, virtue is neither the arithmetical half way between two extremes (it is never that objective), nor is it the median point determined by an individual on an occasion (it is never that relative). The man of practical wisdom is the norm because he is someone who knows not only what is good for himself, but also what is good for everyone (assuming that most people have similar basic needs and goals). He is therefore both an individualist and someone attuned to the general good. The salient point is that he is both like us and exemplary.

Aristotle acknowledges that the exact relationship between the mean and its excess and deficiency is sometimes hard to determine simply from seeing men act.[31] The extremes are opposed to each other as well as to the mean, and the man at either extreme pushes the middle man to the opposite extreme. Thus a brave man might seem reckless compared to a coward, but cowardly compared with a reckless man. Also, there is often a closer relationship between mean and excess than between mean and deficiency. The courageous man has more in common with the reckless man than with the coward; the generous man has more in common with the extravagant man than with the miser. But these ostensible similarities are dissolved when Aristotle points out that the mean is a mid-point only in relation to its distinction between excess and lack. That is to say, recklessness is not an excess of bravery; it is not bravery at all. Recklessness can be identified in contrast to the characteristic actions of a brave man, but it cannot in reality be an extreme because the mean itself is the extreme.

[31]As we will see, the discrepancy between assumed and real self is crucial to understanding Austen's view of manners.

> Just as there cannot be an excess and a deficiency of self-control and courage--because the intermediate is, in a sense, an extreme, so there cannot be a mean, excess, and deficiency in their respective opposites: their opposites are wrong regardless of how they are performed; for, in general, there is no such thing as the mean of an excess or a deficiency, or the excess and deficiency of a mean. (*NE*, 44)

So whatever ostensible resemblance exists between lack and excess on the one hand, and the mean on the other, the character revealed by the activity finally decides what is virtuous and what is not. But what exactly constitutes the person of practical wisdom, and what is the relationship between deliberation and choice on the one hand, and action on the other?

As a first step towards describing practical wisdom, Aristotle distinguishes between voluntary and involuntary actions on the grounds that we are responsible for the first but not for the second. The latter are performed under constraint or through ignorance, but constraint applies only when the force is from without and the agent contributes nothing voluntarily to the action. An act is involuntary through ignorance only when the agent shows regret (a *nonvoluntary* act is when the act is performed in ignorance but without regret). There is also a difference between acting *in* ignorance and acting *due to* ignorance. It is possible to be ignorant on an occasion (because drunk), but in general to know how to act properly. Ignorance of the major premise or universal in a moral syllogism is acting *due to* ignorance; ignorance of the minor premise or particular is acting *in* ignorance. It is important for our later assessment of Austen's characters that we realize immorality is not only ignorance but also voluntary ignorance because a choice of life has been made. Acting due to ignorance is acting from passion, but as passion is internally motivated, it is not excusable as are actions performed under external constraint. Acts of passion or appetite are not involuntary because they are as much a part of human make-up as reason.

Aristotle, however, distinguishes actions motivated by passion and appetite from those *directed* by choice. A morally weak person acts from passion, but only a morally strong person chooses. Aristotle dissociates passion from choice because choice proceeds from deliberation about means to an end, and obviously nobody deliberates when they act from

passion. Choice, then, is directed at means not at ends, for ends can be the object of wishes only. We cannot choose health, we can only wish for it; we can, though, choose the means of attaining health. Deliberation, as the process of reasoning which precedes choice, is distinguished from logical and scientific reason: we do not deliberate about matters of sense perception or matters of established fact, but only about discovering means as a series of steps that will lead through a causal chain to an end. Moreover, we can deliberate only about things which we can effect.[39] The agent who chooses is therefore an efficient cause, having the potential to attain a final cause (an end) through his agency. The notion of efficient cause includes the conception of the end which the agent has as he tries to discover the means towards it. As moral agents, we have the potential to achieve the good; realizing this potential makes us fully human. We either act as efficient causes in choosing means to the good or we do not; if we do not, we are not absolved from blame (as we are if things act externally on us) because we have chosen not to seek these means.

The process of reasoning so far is as follows: an end is the object of a wish, and the means to that end are the objects of deliberation and choice; actions concerned with means are based on choice and are voluntary; activities concerning virtue and vice deal with means; therefore activities of virtue and vice are voluntary (depend on ourselves). So a given kind of activity produces a given kind of person. If we choose vice or virtue it affects our moral characteristics, and it may be that if we originally choose vice, we can no longer help our actions. However, the original choice was a voluntary act. Obviously some bodily "vices" such as ugliness are blameless, but if we become ugly through our own actions, we are blameworthy. Having established the grounds upon which we act virtuously, Aristotle considers a counter argument: people may seek as ends what appears to them as good, but they may have no control over what appears to them. His answer is that if this is true, then nobody is responsible; and any view which cannot account for responsibility could not be used to develop a theory of *morality*. The hypothetical argument could go like this:

the aim we take for the end is not determined by the choice of the individual himself,

---

[39]In embryo, this is the distinction between moral intelligence and intelligence per se which becomes in the Poetics a distinction between ethos and dianoia.

> but by a natural gift of vision, as it were, which enables him to make correct judgements and to choose what is truly good: to be well endowed by nature means to have this natural gift. (*NE*, 67)

The individual does not choose the end, only the means to it; his wish for that end, though, is a product of his moral seeing. But what of those who do not have this natural gift? Are their actions voluntary? Aristotle replies that ends are achieved by voluntary virtuous activity as much as by moral seeing. A man of high moral standards performs the actions necessary to achieve his ends voluntarily; the bad man has the requisite ability to perform voluntary actions even if he cannot formulate his own ends. Moreover, a bad man may see his own (bad) ends and voluntarily pursue them, just as a good man voluntarily chooses the means to his good ends. If the argument is not wholly clear, we should remember that Aristotle wishes to keep distinct the notion of moral goodness as a characteristic which we develop imperceptibly as we perform good actions. However, we develop this characteristic out of our power to behave well or not (out of our original choice of life based on practical wisdom); therefore, characteristics are voluntary.

The choices made by a virtuous man are not, however, guaranteed to produce the desired effect: there is an element of uncertainty in choice which marks a difference between a rational and irrational capacity. An irrational capacity, such as fire's ability to burn, must fulfill its potential just because its nature is determined that way. A rational capacity, on the other hand, can choose between two contrary alternatives, which means that the greater complexity of the rational agent carries with it an element of uncertainty. The very fact that we deliberate before we choose to act implies this uncertainty.[49]

In arguing that moral characteristics are developed by performing good actions, Aristotle believes it to be legitimate to derive normative judgements from facts. He combines the factual and the normative by saying that if individuals are good, what they wish becomes intrinsically wishable, for a good person is the measure of all judgement. Seen in this light, what is wishable is abstracted from what is practised by exemplary people; the actual good

---

[49] H.H.Joachim, The Nicomachean Ethics: A Commentary (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957) 107-111.

itself is what good people do.[41] If there is a telos, then, for human beings, that telos is informed by actual practice. According to Alisdair Macintyre, positing the telos legitimizes the otherwise problematic logical operation of deriving an "is" from an "ought", deemed the "naturalistic fallacy".[42] Those who maintain that the operation is a fallacy are called antievaluationists by Macintyre, and the antievaluationists make the separation between normative judgements and factual statements because they refuse to see that human life has a goal.[43] Given this telos, one can legitimately derive normative judgements from facts: this man behaves in such and such a way; therefore he is a good man because he is fulfilling his function. The assumption of a human telos is necessary because it is the only general way in which "ought" judgements would make sense in a moral rather than in a merely self-interested or pragmatic way. MacIntyre argues this point against "emotivists", who believe that moral judgements are nothing but expressions of preference, and who equate reasons for acting according to a persons's wishes with reasons for acting deriving from moral oughts ("do it because I wish it" as opposed to "do it because you ought to do it").[44] The emotivist, he says, does not acknowledge that the reference of a moral judgement might be quite different from its sense: I may express my emotion by uttering "X", but it does not necessarily follow that the meaning of "X" is affected. The emotivist conflates utterer's meaning with the meaning of the judgement itself; the "ought", which refers to an objective moral imperative, retains its force as an imperative even though the emotivist wants to use it as a request. The emotivist would like to believe that an expression of a person's wishes has as compelling a force as an objective moral judgement, but clearly "I disapprove of this" provides reasons for acting only with reference to myself; it does not provide reasons per se for acting. The assumption of a human telos does not mean that self-expression does not arise

[41]Martin Ostwald points this out in a footnote to his translation of the Ethics, 63-4. This applies equally to Austen, for what her characters do is what makes virtue become realized; it is not an abstract goal.
[42]Alisdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (London: Duckworth, 1985) 56-9.
[43]It is not necessary for this argument that everyone agrees what the goal constitutes; it is primarily an argument for the ability to contemplate what it is to be human, and once this possibility is admitted the debate over various proposals for what constitutes humanity can he held.
[44]After Virtue, 8-9.

in "ought" statements, and a personal sanction of a particular imperative may carry some weight with the person being addressed. However, the ultimate appeal of the objectivist is to the moral imperative and not to his private preference or feeling. The independence of the imperative from the feelings of the speaker conforms to our ordinary use of "ought" statements, for we usually distinguish requests stemming from personal desires from those arising from an expression of what we regard as someone's duty or obligation.

This, in outline, is Aristotle's argument for the virtues, and it remains now as a first step to apply the theory in a general way to Austen's novels. We have seen that the kind of intelligence a virtuous person possesses is not sheer mental ability, for mental ability can sometimes be detrimental to virtue if it is not accompanied by a moral disposition developed by habit. In applying this distinction to Austen, we can see that she is not concerned with how bright her characters are, but with how that brightness is realized in their moral life.[45] Some of her more intelligent characters are cold and calculating, while some of the weaker minds in her books display a simple, good-natured type of virtue. The issue of intellectual virtue is fairly complicated in Aristotle, and the best way to approach Austen's view of mental ability (for our primary concern is her view and not Aristotle's) is to raise the issue of intelligence as it applies to the irrational virtues.

The irrational virtues in Aristotle I will divide into "virtues of human relationship in speech and action" and "virtues of self" (these are my terms, not his); the corresponding virtues in Austen's fiction will be "virtues of manner" and "virtues of character". Aristotle's virtues of human relationship in principle correspond to Austen's virtues of manner because

---

[45]This concern is evident in at least one of the intellectual virtues she mentions: "sensible". She uses it sometimes in the sense of denoting someone's being aware of something, as in "he was sensible of his situation"; but she also uses it in a sense that corresponds to sensibility, having moral perception. This is the "proper" rather than the vulgar use that Samuel Johnson mentions in his dictionary: that is, having moral feeling rather than being reasonable, judicious and wise. She uses it in the proper sense when she says of Darcy: "he expressed himself on the occasion as sensibly and as warmly as a man violently in love can be supposed to do". (*PP*, 325). She uses it in the vulgar sense when she says earlier on in the same novel: "Mr Collins was not a sensible man" (*PP*, 61). However, it is clear from the latter example that she means to elaborate Mr Collins' character as well as his weakness of mind--her perception is that Mr Collins' natural defects exacerbate whatever defects resulted from his upbringing.

both are essentially concerned with public behaviour. But while similar in kind, they are not individually the same virtues. By contrast, Austen's virtues of character individually resemble Aristotle's virtues of self. The discrepancy may be explained by the greater emphasis placed on manner by Austen than by Aristotle, while the character traits which underlie the behavioral virtues are more universalizable.[46] The connection between the different orders of virtue is apparent both in Austen and in Aristotle, and it would be a mistake to think that virtues of self for Aristotle or virtues of character for Austen are private in the sense of "inner" and have no effect on the public self. Both types of virtue reflect the state of a character's soul in Austen, but some can be seen as more obviously public because they have a direct bearing on the social life of the community. The way in which a character behaves in public is the criterion by which he is judged by acquaintances. His behaviour may either be a reflection of his true character or he may adopt manners as a pose. Part of Austen's purpose in her novels is to expose the pretentions of the latter group so that she can uphold the connection between manners and morals.

Although a person's manners do not play as significant a role in Aristotle's conception of virtue, his virtues of human relationship (friendliness, truthfulness, and wittiness) are traits which have ethical significance. The difference between these virtues, Aristotle explains, "is that one mean concerns truthfulness and the other two pleasantness. Of the latter, one (wittiness) is found in amusement and the other (friendliness) in social relations in life in general" (*NE*, 108-9). Truthfulness does not correspond directly to virtues of manner in Austen, for it is closer to the virtue of character depicted in her work that I call

---

[46]There is also a connection between Aristotle's virtues of citizenship and virtues in Austen's novels which involve public spiritedness and generosity. Citizenship virtues in Aristotle are concerned primarily with the citizen's financial contribution to the welfare of the state, and they involve public spiritedness and generosity towards friends and family. Although Austen does not dwell on the virtue of generosity, its lack, stinginess, can be observed in John and Fanny Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility. The famous chapter in which this attractive couple gradually withdraws all financial support for Mrs Dashwood and her daughters exemplifies the vices of stinginess and niggardliness. John Dashwood further betrays his niggardliness when he boasts that he has enclosed some land and in the process has appropriated a tenant's farm. No character in Austen's novels who is stingy is otherwise portrayed in a favourable light.

"self-esteem". Truthfulness for Aristotle is close to the modern notion of candour or frankness, and should be distinguished from Austen's notion of candour. Aristotle defines the truthful man as one who "admits to the qualities he possesses and neither exaggerates or understates them" (*NE*, 105). The self-depreciating man is one who understates his qualities and represents the lack; the boastful man is one who exaggerates his qualities and represents the excess. The virtue is to be frank about one's own merits or defects either through some ulterior motive or because it is in the agent's character to be truthful. The latter is preferable for Aristotle: he sees such a man as being "more inclined to understand the truth" (*NE*, 106). Aristotle does not make it clear what ulterior motives a truthful man might have but says that honesty involves scrupulous avoidance of falsehood "when no other considerations are involved" (*NE*, 106). Presumably, he means when other considerations of a higher order than honesty are at stake. The boastful man is reprehensible for his motives; if his motive is honour, his boasting is excusable, but if the motive is money, he is blameworthy. Self-depreciation can be an indirect boast, and can usually be seen through easily. Truthfulness, however, has more to do with character than it does with manners because it is not strictly relevant to behaviour at public gatherings.

The most important virtue in this respect is friendliness because the friendly man's concern "seems to be with the pleasures and pains that are found in social relations" (*NE*, 103). This virtue covers our social interactions with acquaintances, associates and strangers.[47] Although Ostwald translates Aristotle's term *philia* as *friendliness*, it is probably more accurate to speak of *sociable* or *amiable* in Jane Austen's sense. The sociable man exhibits a median in his attitude towards others in social and public encounters; all things being equal, he will try to maximize the pleasure and minimize the pain of others, but will do so only if it is noble or beneficial. He will not avoid giving pain to others if it is ignoble to give them pleasure. The motive of doing what is noble and beneficial to others is therefore the means of distinguishing the sociable man from the obsequious man (the excess) and the grouchy man

[47]Friendliness in this sense has nothing to do with the friendship Aristotle discusses in Books Eight and Nine of *NE*. As he says, "it involves no emotion or affection for those with whom one associates" (103).

(the lack). One who is obsequious either has no ulterior motive and merely wishes to be pleasant, or he has a base ulterior motive--such as financial gain or social advancement--and is a flatterer. The obsequious man either has no ulterior motive for his behaviour or he has a base one. The grouchy man simply has no ulterior motive and cares nothing for the pleasure or pain he causes others. Behaviour in public is therefore primarily the result of character disposition, one pleasant the other unpleasant. The sociable man's actions are the result of prudently weighing-up the pleasure and pain he causes with the greater goods of nobility and beneficence. This is properly a calculating attitude, for the sociable man must consider the ulterior motive as he is not here engaged in true friendship, which is disinterested.

Finally, the virtue relevant to amusement in public places is wittiness. Wittiness has broader social implications than might seem from its relation to the lack (boorishness) and to the excess (buffoonery). People ought to derive pleasure from social occasions, but not at the expense of someone else. Wittiness should therefore involve an ulterior motive--the desire to be humorous with decorum and tact. Aristotle argues that when this motive is missing--when someone is funny merely for the sake of creating laughter--he is a buffoon. The buffoon not only lacks decorum, but has no regard for the pain caused by his jokes.[41] The boor, on the other hand, never says anything funny and too easily takes offence when others laugh. Wit for Aristotle implies versatility; like the body, the mind is praised "for the way it moves" (*NE*, 107). Wit is therefore a cultivated art and not just a character trait.

From this analysis of friendliness, wittiness, and truthfulness, it is evident that Aristotle considers tact, decorum, and prudence as necessary motives. Even truthfulness, which alone among the three can be a character trait rather than a practised art, requires that one be truthful at the right time and in the right manner. The cultivation and refinement one achieves by following the mean in human relations should not be seen as underhand, which is clear if we consider how self-depreciation carries overtones of slyness in comparison with frankness and honesty. We might call these manners of excess without motive or with a base motive "sham" manners. They appear akin to virtue because in practice they look like the

[41]As we will see later, this becomes an important criterion in assessing comedy, which, says Aristotle, depicts ugliness but causes no pain.

virtue, while the lack in each case looks like virtue's opposite. In Austen's fiction, "sham" manners, those in excess of the mean, appear as dissimulation; this excess is a display of manners or is a pose, as if posture represents true character. A lack of manners covers both plain rudeness or antisocial behaviour and an unwillingness to play a social role. There is a legitimate sense in which, as Aristotle observes, a person may be studiedly mannered in public even if not inclined. "We neither of us perform to strangers", says Mr Darcy to Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice, but the novel's events force Darcy to be more studiedly tolerant of his social inferiors.

Comparing Austen and Aristotle shows both believe that manners involve a conscious decision on how to behave in public. MacIntyre incorrectly says that on Aristotle's account "virtues attach not to men as inhabiting social roles, but to man as such. It is the telos of a man as a species which determines what human qualities are virtues".[49] To repeat, the virtues of social relations in both authors are relevant to "man as such", but they are distinguishable in that they deal specifically with the public self, or what we have come to call "manners". To take Pride and Prejudice as an example, there is little discrepancy exhibited between the character (the "real" self) and the social self by Mrs Bennet and Mr Collins. Both characters make no effort to discover how to behave properly, and both are unable to prevent their true character from overshadowing their attempts to emulate acceptable manners. At the other extreme, Wickham's ability to make the correct decisions as to public behaviour allows him to conceal his true character. His behaviour is thus motivated, but in an underhand way. The mean in social relationships is therefore consciously chosen behaviour motivated by goals higher than the immediate objectives of each particular act. I am friendly to a person not just because I want to please him, but because friendliness leads to social harmony when it is not dishonourable to be friendly. For Jane Austen, social harmony was a particularly valuable goal of manners because the community greatly valued its social gatherings, and these gatherings were for some the primary means of social interaction. So the "calculating" aspect of mannered behaviour is in fact concern for others, and this other-regarding quality

[49] After Virtue, 184.

exhibited in both virtues of manner and virtues of character is what justifies the practice of virtue. I will have more to say on the relationship between character and manners, but first what are the virtues of manner in Jane Austen?

**Appendix–Table of Virtues**

| **AUSTEN** | **ARISTOTLE** |
|---|---|
| *Virtues of Manner* | *Virtues of Human Relationships* |
| lack/mean/excess | lack/mean/excess |
| reserve/ease/dissimulation | boorish/witty/buffoon |
| civil/polite/servile | self-depreciating/truthful/boastful |
| vulgar/elegant/fine | grouchy/friendly/obsequious |
| inoffensive/amiable/"aimable" | |
| *Virtues of Character* | *Virtues of Self* |
| self-deny/sensibility/self-indulge | self-deny/self-control/self-indulge |
| apathy/gentle/meddlesome | apathy/gentle/short-temper |
| self-efface/self-esteem/vain | petty/high-minded/vain |
| gullible/candid/suspicious | |

## III. The Virtues of Manner

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed;
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound. (Ben Jonson)

The virtues of manner in Austen's fiction fall into two sets.[50] One set, which constitutes reserve/ease/dissimulation and inoffensiveness/amiability/"aimable", is distinguishable by the lack in each case being an unwillingness or an inability to put oneself forward in public, to express opinions or to make observations. This inhibition is a defect because it increases the awkwardness of social occasions, and in the case of reserve, encourages people to entertain false opinions of the character in question. The excess in each case is represented by those who carry outspokenness to the point of dissimulation in one case, and to egotism in the other. The mean in each case combines a natural disposition to be friendly and open with an ability to discern when both are appropriate. Achieving the mean also implies that the motive is not self-seeking, but that the character wants to enhance the harmony and pleasure of social contact. In general, the excess in this set is far more reprehensible than the lack, even though it resembles the mean much more. In the other set, "servility" is the only excessive form of mannered behaviour that resembles the mean less than does a deficiency. This set

[50]The terms used here do not correspond exactly to those used by Austen to describe each virtue. Certain terms, such as "politeness", she uses both in a positive and negative sense, and therefore the virtue I describe as politeness does not mean that all acts of politeness display this virtue. In short, I am more rigid in my use of the terms than Austen tends to be. This rigidness serves primarily to clarify the moral issues involved rather than to capture the rich use of language in the novels.

comprises civility/politeness/servility and vulgarity/elegance/fineness. Generally in Austen, those exhibiting vulgarity or servility are unable to present themselves effectively due to a weak mind; the fault here is a definite inability rather than a character trait. Civility and fineness on the other hand are moral failings rather than intellectual weaknesses. Characteristic of these two defects is coldness and haughtiness; characters in each case are able to use the style that accompanies the mean, but in a way that is designed to insult or to appear superior. The mean in both cases again requires that the motive involves thoughtfulness and consideration towards others and that the manner displayed is a true reflection of the sentiment felt.

Austen views forms of mannered behaviour which are potentially deceiving as the most reprehensible. She is aware that in a highly mannered society such as her own, the possibility exists that unscrupulous people could advance their private interests at the expense of others by copying the accepted form of behaviour. This possibility places an onus on some characters to be able to distinguish dissimulation from the real thing. This onus Elizabeth Bennet tacitly acknowledges when she considers that she should have seen through Wickham's readiness to condemn Darcy to a stranger. Little things give the dissimulators away, but particularly their inability to maintain the sham consistently and at the same time be themselves. Ideally, manners should be all that they seem to be, but in a world that is not ideal the ability to discriminate is itself a virtue. This ability should not be seen as being judgemental for its own sake; it is not uncharitable judgement, but judgement that protects the unwary from deceivers. Discrimination is therefore a primary intellectual virtue in Austen's novels, but it is tempered by moral considerations.

It is tempting to see the characters with a keen sense of discrimination as policemen who operate in a community which has no legal means of redress against the unvirtuous. Austen, of course, is concerned with antisocial behaviour, not with criminal behaviour. But antisocial behaviour needs to be regulated, and the coercive force operating is the opinion of the community. The dissimulators require that good opinion so they can operate freely, and its withdrawal leaves them helpless. For those whose antisocial behaviour is less threatening,

punishment consists in rendering them less effective--Lady Catherine and Mr Elton serve as examples here. These consequences are consistent with what Samuel Johnson calls the justice that should operate in literature[51] and with the idealistic element in Austen's fiction whereby virtue is actually realized in overpowering vice.

Before discussing the separate virtues, let me make two generalizations. The first is that the more reprehensible vices in the second set, fineness and civility, are not as socially threatening as are dissimulation and gallantry, which form the more reprehensible vices in the first set. The punishments meted out to the latter two are generally more severe than those the former receive. The second is that there are no female dissimulators in the sense I have defined that term, although this seems to be merely a contingent fact. On the other hand, gallantry is by nature a male trait, even though the virtue and the lack associated with it are not determined by gender. The female trait closest to gallantry is fineness, which is an attempt to create a good opinion of oneself on the basis of appearance and status alone. Fineness in males is almost indistinguishable from gallantry, and the model here is Mr Elton. The justification for separating Mr Elton from the other "gallants" is that his role is not to be a potential rival for the affections of the heroine. That he aspires to be Emma's suitor is not the same thing because she is never in danger of falling for him, just as Mr Collins' "gallantry" never threatens to sway Elizabeth. The real gallants pose a definite threat to the heroine's happiness because they divert her from her true partner.

To deal with vulgarity/elegance/fineness first, we can distinguish three different senses of elegance in Austen's fiction. Norman Page points out how Austen's uses of the term exploit the richness of its meaning in currency at the time:

> it can cover a range of senses, from the conventional coquettishness which is its meaning for Mr Collins (and from which the author plainly dissociates herself), through the attractive dignity in appearance and social manner which Emma finds in Jane Fairfax, to that fine sensitivity and discrimination and instinctive good

---

[51] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to Shakespeare" in Rasselas, Poems, and Selected Prose, ed. Bertrand H.Bronson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958) 249-250

taste...which constitute elegance of mind.[52]

True elegance is the last mentioned, for it involves an ability of mind which is specifically a moral ability; the second meaning is also approbatory, but the fine-honed mental ability seems lacking in the two characters who represent it best: Jane Fairfax and Jane Bennet. Both Janes, and especially the latter, seem a little insipid because their reserve does not allow them to be sufficiently animated to make their elegance seem natural. Yet this second type of elegance is distinguished from the first because it is not an affectation. The sense in which Mr Collins uses the term is not the one to emphasize here; "elegance" is, rather, what in a special sense can be called "fineness".

This trait is observed by Emma in both Mr and Mrs Elton as a lack, but it is really an excess even though Emma does not see it in these terms. It is excessive because Elton does not temper his manners to the occasion but is always anxious to please; and his attentions are invariably directed towards women. What Emma sees in Elton is the potential to be thought elegant by the undiscriminating.

> He was a very pleasing young man whom any woman not fastidious might like. He was reckoned very handsome; his person much admired in general, though not by her, there being a want of elegance of feature which she could not dispense with. (*E*, 31)

Emma sees in Elton's pleasing appearance and manners a lack of depth. By "feature" she means how facial expression is affected by character, regardless of actual physical beauty. Elton manages to please because he knows how to use his appearance to his social advantage, illustrating a sense of elegance Johnson gives in his Dictionary : "pleasing with minuter beauties".[53] This wonderful phrase is possibly meant to parallel Johnson's aesthetic distaste for art which concentrates on minute detail rather than provides a picture of general nature.

---

[52]Norman Page, The Language of Jane Austen, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972) 66. In my discussion of the virtues in Austen, I am indebted to Page's assessment of the special meaning attached to certain of the terms she uses.

[53]Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language 4 Vols. (London: Longman, 1805) Vol.2. All subsequent references to this text will appear in the body of the chapter under volume number.

In any case, Elton is overanxious to please, but his methods are too blatantly concentrated. As John Knightley observes,

> "I never in my life saw a man more intent on being agreeable than Mr Elton. It is a downright labour to him where ladies are concerned. With men he can be rational and unaffected, but when he has ladies to please, every faculty works" (*E*, 101).[54]

The idea of intention and labour here shows that Elton's gallantry is not a natural disposition as Jane Fairfax's and Jane Bennet's elegance are. Elton represents an excess because his object is too specific, and Knightley implies in his remarks that Elton is being devious because he is able to be rational and unaffected with men. In the Dictionary, Johnson gives one sense of fineness as "subtlety; artfulness; ingenuity" (Vol.2), suggesting that the person who exhibits the trait knows how to get what he wants. Elton knows that his physical beauty adds weight to his advances to women because the undiscriminating confuse beauty of presentation with beauty of soul. And Elton's concentration on women links fineness in males to gallantry. One definition Johnson gives of a gallant is "a wooer; one who courts women to marry them" (Vol.2). Unfortunately for Elton, he is not discriminating enough to know that his real object is too discriminating to fall for him.

The eventual Mrs Elton is her husband's counterpart, and she is seen by Emma to share the same features as Mr Elton.

> Emma would not allow herself entirely to form an opinion of the lady, and on no account to give one, beyond the nothing-meaning terms of being "elegantly dressed, and very pleasing".
>
> She did not really like her. She would not be in a hurry to find fault, but she suspected that there was no elegance. She was almost sure that for a young woman, a stranger, there was too much ease. Her person was rather good; her face was not unpretty; but neither feature, nor air, nor voice, nor manner, were elegant. Emma thought at least it would turn out so. (*E*, 243)

It does turn out so. The ironic reflection that Emma's judgement is biased does not affect its

---

[54]Note here that Knightley uses "feature" in a different sense than Emma. Here it means "faculty", but the underlying suggestion is of surface feature.

accuracy. One can sometimes discriminate accurately even where predisposition is involved. Once again "feature" betrays character as if character were inscribed upon the face, however pretty. Emma's comment helps us to understand the sense in which good looks are distorted by character, that ugliness of character will show on the face. The comment about ease has to do with assumed ease, which is not the same as unaffected openness. Mrs Elton assumes an ease with people she does not know, but it is not in her character, as it is with Mr Bingley, for example, to be open. Mrs Elton's object is to win friends, as Elton's object is to get a wife, and she begins her business straight away. Emma's observation reflects Aristotle's distinction between manners towards acquaintances and towards friends; manners towards acquaintances are not disinterested, but calculated to serve a good. One has to choose, moreover, when it is honourable to be friendly and when not, and it is not honourable when the motive is self-interest or what we now call "social climbing". True friendship is disinterested and it assumes a knowledge of the friend. Mrs Elton, then, behaves in a friendly manner (in the second sense) towards people who merit friendship only in the first sense. Her presumptions arouse Emma's suspicion that "all is not sweet, all is not sound".

That all is not sound with the Eltons is eventually revealed. One instance will serve to illustrate that the fineness of the Eltons is a sham and cannot be consistently maintained; it also illustrates what true elegance involves. Mr Knightley is elegant in his thoughtfulness towards Harriet after she has been snubbed by Mr Elton at the Westons' ball. Knightley dances with Harriet after Elton, despite promptings from Mrs Weston, refuses to dance with her. "The amiable, obliging, gentle Mr Elton" (*E*, 295), says Emma to herself with sardonic reflection.[55] Elton's gallantry is not heart-felt; peeved by Emma's refusal of his marriage offer, he wounds Harriet by way of avenging himself on Emma. If Elton is naturally petty and vindictive and hides it by fake gallantry, Knightley shows genuine concern and is able to implement that concern because of his natural social graces. Emma observes how well he dances with Harriet and how he restores her spirits by his elegance and dancing ability. Emma

[55]This is an example of approbatory terms used ironically by Austen. The reader must be careful in deciding when these terms are used literally and in their full moral sense and when not. This is especially true when a character uses words in ways Austen would not approve.

later reflects that the behaviour of the Eltons "threatened to ruin the rest of her evening" (*E*, 299). Knightley's gesture shows not only kindliness and sensitivity to Harriet, it restores the equilibrium of a social occasion upset by Elton's rudeness.

In Elton's action we can also see the difference between excess of elegance and its lack: that a mere show of elegance hides a character defect whereas vulgarity is more a failure of mind. However, the distinction is complicated by the notion of "intellectual" or "mental" involved. As Aristotle suggests, virtuous action cannot be the result of mere cleverness; it has to be motivated by moral principle. It is debatable whether this point of evaluation can be ignored and the claim made that a clever person is as mentally capable as one who uses intelligence as a means to virtue. Austen apparently wants to preserve the distinction, not only as a point of moral judgement, but also as a judgement of mental capability. Those who display fineness (and "display" is the operative word), Mr and Mrs Elton, Lady Catherine de Burgh, Lucy Steele, the Bingley sisters, Maria and Julia Bertram, are not outright stupid, but they have no depth of mind, no real power of discrimination or obviously superior mental ability. This shallowness is, to the discriminating, inscribed upon their faces or is evident in their speech and manners. Lady Catherine, for example, betrays her shallowness in the exchange with Elizabeth over Darcy's expected proposal of marriage. When Elizabeth asks why she should not accept Darcy if she is his choice, Lady Catherine replies: "Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay interest, forbid it" (*PP*, 315). This assertion, with its descending scale of values, makes it look as if Lady Catherine understands that they are values of different ethical importance. But in her debased view, each word signifies only a narrow class interest and this interest poses as disinterested valuation. Lady Catherine's ability to discriminate is corrupted by her debased understanding, just as Mrs Bennet's understanding is partly corrupted by her limited view of what life holds for her. The point of comparing these two is to show that status does not guarantee virtue, and it takes the events of Pride and Prejudice for Darcy to realize that he has as much grounds to be ashamed of his own relatives as Elizabeth has of hers.

As Emma observes of Mr and Mrs Elton, there is something aesthetically unsatisfying about those who exhibit sham elegance. Gilbert Ryle points out that there is a strong affinity in Austen's fiction between virtue and aesthetic sense; her ethical vocabulary is strongly laced with aesthetic terms--beauty of mind, delicacy of principle, for example.[56] The Bingley sisters, as a case in point, are "very fine ladies", but as Elizabeth says, "their manners are not equal to his [Bingley's]" (*PP*, 12). In spite of their appearance, when compared to Bingley's genial openness, their coldness and haughtiness seem vulgar. Lady Catherine displays similar vulgarity in her pushiness at Rosings; and Lucy Steele, Maria and Julia Bertram, all look well enough, but whatever initial impression they create is soon overshadowed by their lack of dignity, not necessarily in the way they express their thoughts (though that sometimes too), but in the thoughts behind the expression.

This suggestion of vulgarity gives these characters an affinity with those in the lack category: the blatantly vulgar, such as Mrs Bennet, Mrs Palmer, Mrs Jennings, Mrs Allen, and Mr Collins. With the exception of Mrs Jennings, none of these characters displays any moral understanding, or any other kind of understanding for that matter, except for whatever falls into their narrow range of desires. These characters are not as clever as those in the excess category, so it never occurs to them to dress their vulgarity in fineness. Austen clearly rates these characters the less dangerous because even to the undiscriminating, their true selves are apparent. Some of them, Mrs Bennet and Mr Collins, for instance, are manipulators like those in the excess category, but their vulgarity makes this obvious. There is some degree of vulgarity in all the characters with whom Austen is out of sympathy, but the blatantly vulgar are in a class of their own. They also seem to disappear after Pride and Prejudice; in the later novels we get a form of vulgarity softened by good nature, for which Mrs Jennings seems to be the model. For example, Miss Bates, Mr Woodhouse, and Lady Bertram lack intelligence, but not good qualities. For them, good humour comes naturally. None of these latter characters has the active moral sense of Mrs Jennings, though, and the most glaring fault of Mr Woodhouse and Lady Bertram is their apathy. In manners, Mrs Jennings is more like Mrs

---

[56] "Jane Austen and the Moralists", 180.

Norris in that she is a busybody, but, as Ryle points out, she is the only character in Austen who combines blatant vulgarity with a good heart.[57]

Politeness, the second virtue of manner, is more difficult to define precisely although the meaning I intend has currency with Johnson. Johnson defines politeness as "elegance of manner; gentility; good breeding" (Vol. 3). It is a virtue of manner akin to *candour*, in the eighteenth-century sense and is best defined initially in relation to its lack and excess. Politeness is opposed to its lack, civility, where the ritual behaviour associated with the mean is performed, but where the heart of the performer is at odds with the ostensible behaviour. Austen sometimes makes "politeness" and "civility" synonyms, and sometimes she uses "politeness" ironically as when Elizabeth says "Mr Darcy is all politeness"(*PP*, 22). To distinguish politeness from civility, it should be observed that civility can be both a disposition and a way of behaving on a particular occasion if one wishes to make certain feelings known indirectly. Politeness is observed towards strangers and acquaintances, but if one is polite to intimates, this is civility in the second sense. Willoughby, when he encounters Marianne in London after his romantic association with her, treats her with strict politeness, which means, to Marianne's mortification, that he wishes to dissociate himself from her. In a subsequent letter to Marianne, Willoughby again observes a cold, formal politeness, and on reading it, Elinor reflects on what this entails about Willoughby's character.

> Though aware, before she began it, that it must bring a confession of his inconstancy, and confirm their separation for ever, she was not aware that such language could be suffered to announce it; nor could she have supposed Willoughby capable from departing so far from *the appearance* [my emphasis] of every honourable and delicate feeling--so far from the common decorum of a gentleman, as to send a letter so impudently cruel: a letter which, instead of bringing with his desire of a release any professions of regret, acknowledged no breach of faith, denied all particular affection whatever--a letter of which every line was an insult, and which proclaimed its writer to be deep in hardened villainy. (*SS*, 159)

---

[57] "Jane Austen and the Moralists", 180.

Elinor's reflections again illustrate the principle that manners towards intimates cannot be the same as manners towards acquaintances. And it also illustrates that mere politeness does not denote good breeding; this is revealed when a character knows when it is honourable to be polite. As far as Willoughby is concerned, although seeming at first to be a passionate man, he allows his love for Marianne to be sacrificed for a mercenary attachment to a wealthy heiress. Willoughby is not usually cold and civil in his manners, but he adopts civility to conceal his unprincipled behaviour.

Civility of disposition on the other hand is a lack of politeness in a character who is incapable of warmth or feeling. It is not, as it appears in Mr Collins for example, a grotesque parody of manners but is an affectation in individuals who are cold and self-centred and for whom polite small-talk is the only means of social interaction. In Persuasion, Sir Walter Elliot and his eldest daughter Elizabeth are civil in this sense. In the following passage, Anne Elliot describes their effect on a gathering that had hitherto been friendly and animated:

> other visitors approached, and the door was thrown open for Sir Walter and Miss Elliot, whose entrance seemed to give a general chill. Anne felt an instant oppression, and, wherever she looked, saw symptoms of the same. The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over, hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister. How mortifying to feel that it was so! (*P*, 213)

This "heartless elegance" links civility of disposition to false elegance, and the difference seems to be one of mental ability. [51] In character there seems not much difference between the likes of Caroline Bingley and Sir Walter Elliot, but whereas Miss Bingley tends towards deliberate dissimulation by using cleverness, in Sir Walter there is little disparity between the real and social self: he is just as cold and heartless among friends as he is among acquaintances. We assume that Caroline can affect warmth through cleverness as she does with Jane Bennet, but Sir Walter is not capable of varying his presentation of himself to suit his purpose. For him, civility is the only means open to him, and it is compatible with his

[51] Notice here, as elsewhere, Austen often applies a derogatory epithet like "heartless" to denote lacks and excesses which can have the same name as the virtue.

character.

This inability to vary is also symptomatic of the excess of politeness or "servility".[59] The trait closely resembles Aristotle's obsequious man, and, as represented by Mr Collins, it is a parody of polite behaviour. Servility occurs when a weak mind observes social form and tries to imitate it, but when the imitation becomes a grotesque distortion of the real thing. Mr Collins, in reply to Mr Bennet's question whether his "pleasing attentions" to Lady Catherine are the result of impulse or previous study, says they are the result of both.

> "They arise chiefly from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible". (*PP*, 60)

Once more we see debasement of a word, "elegant", and Austen implicitly invites us to attach an epithet like "ridiculous". Oddly enough, it is partially true that Mr Collins' attentions are "natural" in the sense that they are part of his character. His natural defects of character and his weakness of mind combine to make his attempts to emulate politeness look ridiculous. Collins is the only character in Austen's major fiction who exhibits servility to this degree, and in this he is the closest Austen gets to the comic grotesque of Dickens.

While Mr Collins' studied attentions have the ulterior motive of flattery, true politeness involves Aristotle's notion of an ulterior motive of a higher order than the immediate effect produced by the act itself. An individual should not be polite merely to reflect well on himself, but to be decorous: to adhere to social conventions, not for their own sake, but for the sake of social harmony. This also means that respect for the feelings of others should be a priority. For this reason Elinor is outraged that Willoughby does not even give the appearance of delicacy in his letter to Marianne (*SS*, 159). Even if he no longer loves her, he is obliged to spare her feelings as much as possible by finding a gentle way to break the news to her. His politeness is thus an insult because he has a corrupt ulterior motive. Page

---

[59]The excess involved in servility can be distinguished from civility because in the latter case, the person maintains a very minimal degree of politeness, while in the former he tends to do much more than formal politeness requires.

shows that politeness is a mode of address, and that it is used for equals or superiors in rank.[46] Although not high on Austen's scale of values, perhaps because it is so easily imitated, the ability to be polite on the appropriate occasion still distinguishes it from civility. To be polite is to be prudent rather than deceitful or cold of manner, and, whereas civility in the second sense implies condescension, politeness could not be taken as patronizing. It is the correct manner for the candid person to adopt because it makes people feel that their conversation is interesting, even if it is not. Politeness, then, covers both formally correct behaviour towards strangers, and is a way of inconspicuously distancing oneself from a boring or stupid acquaintance.

One problem that politeness prevents is the temptation for one of superior abilities to disdain those of inferior abilities or inferior rank. Mr Darcy, for example, prides himself on the firmness of his opinions and refuses to feign interest in the concerns of others for the sake of social convention. "I certainly have not the talent", he says to Elizabeth, "of conversing easily with those I have never seen before. I cannot catch their tone of conversation, or appear interested in their concerns, as I often see done" (*PP*, 156). Austen, one suspects, has some sympathy for Darcy's unwillingness merely to pose as an interested conversationalist; indeed the general tenor of her critique of manners is to despise whatever is counterfeit. But the real question here is whether the small deceit that politeness entails is ignoble; this is the line drawn by Aristotle beyond which "performance" in public begins to look like flattery. We are meant to see in Darcy's comments a dislike for the way interest is shown ("as I often see done"); that is, in the actual demeaning of the self which occurs when someone stoops to flattery. What Darcy confuses or conflates is the style in which some people feign interest in the concerns of others with the true principle motivating such concern. Darcy is right to believe that the style is sometimes demeaning and ignoble, but wrong to think that the act itself is always so. Where the harmony of the occasion is the ulterior motive, it is not ignoble politely to tolerate the concerns of others. Darcy's inflexibility on this score makes his manners uninviting compared with Bingley's affability, and we are told

[46] The Language of Jane Austen, 68.

early on in the novel that Darcy's manners were "continually giving offence" (*PP*, 13). Although Darcy does not much care about giving offence to those he regards as inferiors, his refusal to perform almost costs him his happiness. In the scene where he first proposes to Elizabeth, Darcy is typically inflexible where his judgement is concerned. Torn between his feelings for Elizabeth and his judgement that he is compromising his status, Darcy's proposal is too frank an admission of his dilemma.

> He spoke well, but there were feelings besides those of the heart to be detailed, and he was not more eloquent on the subject of tenderness than of pride. His sense of her inferiority--of its being a degradation--of the family obstacles which judgement had always opposed to inclination, were dwelt on with a warmth which seemed due to the consequence he was wounding, but was very unlikely to recommend his suit. (*PP*, 168)

That Austen speaks for Darcy in this passage indicates her basic sympathy for him: she will not allow Darcy to be condemned by his own words as she does Collins when he proposes to Elizabeth.[61] Darcy realizes as he speaks that he is "wounding" his cause, and, while there is a certain nobility in his frankness, he must eventually learn to soften his intransigence where pride is concerned. That Darcy achieves the mean is shown by his behaviour at the end of the novel:

> the arrival of [Charlotte] was a sincere pleasure to Elizabeth, though in the course of their meetings she must sometimes think the pleasure dearly bought, when she saw Mr Darcy exposed to all the parading and obsequious civility of her husband [Collins]. He bore it, however, with admirable calmness. He could even listen to Sir William Lucas...with very decent composure. If he did shrug his shoulders, it was not until Sir William was out of sight. (*PP*, 341)

Politeness is portrayed here as a kind of temperance, as an ability not to get ruffled by the folly of others. Charlotte Lucas observes of Mr Darcy that he has a right to be proud, and he exercises that right with a warmth that makes him enemies. By the end, he recognizes his

[61]Collins' proposal is almost a direct parody of Darcy's; Collins' frankness, though, does not harm his suit because nothing could recommend it in the first place.

obligation to be tolerant of those whose inferiority gives him that right to be proud.

From this account, it should be apparent that Austen attaches less blame to those vices which involve a weakness of mind: vulgarity and servility are less blameworthy than their counterpart vices (dissimulation, *aimable*) in being the result of natural defects. While fineness and civility may involve cleverness, however, neither shows moral intelligence or a sensitivity to moral distinctions. In addition, fineness and civility (except civility of disposition) involve an ulterior motive at odds with ostensible behaviour.

So far, we have seen that Austen's depiction of these virtues and vices accords with Aristotle in the attempt to show that natural defects are more or less blameless provided that there is little the agent can do about it; in addition we have observed how the presence of the ulterior motive, either good or base, which is essential to Aristotle's notion of moral behaviour in public, functions in Austen's novels. In the second category of the virtues of manners--that comprising openness and amiability--a parallel analysis cannot be so easily made. This is primarily because reserve, the lack of openness, is exhibited by characters who are clearly in other respects virtuous. The term is applied explicitly to Jane Fairfax and Edward Ferrars and implicitly to Fanny Price. For each of these characters, we are not invited by Austen to see their reserve as a defect of mind, but as the result of an external oppression. In modern terms, we would see them as being depressed, not manically so, but owing to a specific cause. Inoffensiveness, the lack of amiability, presents a separate problem in that it is obviously not a lack of amiability because inoffensive people are unfriendly or ill-tempered. Inoffensiveness (and indeed reserve) contribute little or nothing to the happiness of the social event because the ulterior motive is lacking. An inoffensive person is friendly or at least even-tempered by disposition, so the ulterior motive rarely comes into play. Austen's critique of this type is, like Aristotle's, founded on the belief that it can be dishonourable to be friendly, and that the inoffensive are undiscriminating in this respect. At the opposite extreme, the "aimable" have an ulterior motive for being friendly, but here the motive is self-interest. The "aimable" tend towards dissimulation, but are less dangerous than those who exhibit complete dissimulation, which forms the excess of openness.

To approach reserve first--the problem associated with this trait in Austen's characters is that it never seems to be a vice as such. To understand Austen's attitude towards the characters who exhibit it, we need to understand why they are reserved and what moral distinctions should be drawn between their reserve and traits in other characters who can be legitimately compared with them. In each case, Austen wishes us to understand the circumstances causing their reserve, and this implies that there is a problem or a lack. Reserve needs to be characterized generally so that the problem as well as the cause can be described.

Reserve is abstention and reticence, an unwillingness to express oneself freely and a refusal to be familiar. These definitions make clearer why it can be thought of as a lack, to use the terms of Aristotle's model. As ostensible behaviour, reserve not only makes the person seem socially ill at ease, but it also hinders the possibility of intimacy with that person. In the following exchange from Emma, Frank Churchill and Emma are discussing Jane Fairfax's reserve.

> "And then, her reserve--I never could attach myself to anyone so completely reserved."
>
> "It is a most repulsive quality, indeed," said he. "Oftentimes very convenient, no doubt, but never pleasing. There is safety in reserve, but no attraction. One cannot love a reserved person."
>
> "Not till the reserve ceases towards oneself; and then the attraction may be the greater. But I must be more in want of a friend, or an agreeable companion, than I have ever yet been, to take the trouble of conquering any body's reserve to procure one. Intimacy between Miss Fairfax and me is quite out of the question. I have no reason to think ill of her--not the least--except that such extreme and perpetual cautiousness of word and manner, such a dread of giving a distinct idea about any body, is apt to suggest suspicions of there being something to conceal. (*E*, 182)

While savouring the irony of this exchange, we should not be distracted from seeing it as a useful general description of reserve. The two problems mentioned by Frank and Emma are that reserve is not attractive or pleasing, although safe, and that it is a barrier to intimacy.

On the one hand, it detracts from the pleasure of social contact, while on the other it hinders the development from acquaintance to friendship.

In Sense and Sensibilty, Edward Ferrar's reserve makes a similar impression on Marianne. It is worth remembering that we are speaking here of the way in which a character presents himself to those who know him only a little. As Aristotle says, the criteria governing our conduct towards acquaintances are of a different order than what governs our behaviour towards intimates. In the former case, one performs to an extent, but the performance is ruled by an ulterior motive of a higher order. Towards intimates, such a performance could rightly be called an affectation. When we do not know the person, though, we are immediately affected by the performance, not by what we might fathom to be the underlying real self (this is the key issue in the early part of Pride and Prejudice). Reserve--or lack of performance--may therefore leave us puzzled and suspicious. This is the tenor of Marianne's complaint about Edward Ferrars' manners. The motive for her complaint is whether he seems to be a suitable mate for her sister:

> he is not the kind of young man--there is something wanting--his figure is not striking; it has none of that grace which I should expect in the man who could seriously attach my sister. His eyes want all that spirit, that fire, which at once announce virtue and intelligence...Mama, the more I know of the world, the more I am convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much! He must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manner must ornament his goodness with every possible charm. (*SS*, 14-15.)

This critique of Edward is given, of course, strictly from the Romantic point of view and not from Austen's. Edward's lack of animation precludes him in Marianne's eyes from having the kind of sensitivity towards nature that the Romantic spirit demands. Such a spirit demands to see this sensitivity "at once": that is, on the surface, in the manners of the person. Again, though, disregarding the implied criticism of Marianne, reserve can be seen as a lack.

It is plausible to argue that Austen is partially in sympathy with the criticisms some of her characters make of reserve. For example, one of the failings of Jane Bennet in Pride and

Prejudice is that, while she has strong feelings, she never displays them. Her lack of animation in public almost causes her to lose the man she loves. When discussing this topic of displaying feelings, Charlotte Lucas tells Elizabeth: "In nine cases out of ten, a woman had better show *more* [Austen's emphasis] affection than she feels" (*PP*, 17). Charlotte wrongly supposes that Jane's reserve is a contrivance, and her supposition is caused by the pragmatic attitude she takes towards human affairs. She assumes that like herself, nobody really loves and that therefore we should make a show of love to catch a mate. Charlotte also reveals that she believes Jane's reserve to be a form of dissimulation, a skilful manipulation of another's affections. Even though this is a misinterpretation of Jane's character, it demonstrates how reserve tends to reflect badly on a character. Elizabeth, too, is forced to comment unfavourably on her sister's reserve: "She felt that Jane's feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and that there was a constant complacency in her air and manner, not often united with great sensibility" (*PP*, 185). "Complacency" is used here, not in the sense of obliging (Austen sometimes uses it synonymously with "complaisant"), but in the sense of self-satisfied.

The prejudice against excessive reserve is strong, and nowhere more so than against Fanny Price in Mansfield Park, although this time the prejudice is expressed by commentators rather than by characters in the novel. Fanny has been the object of vituperative attacks by some critics, even those who are generally sympathetic to Austen. The attacks are based upon the critics' own presuppositions of what a heroine should be. Marvin Mudrick, for example, sees Fanny as a complacent prig, and his judgement of Fanny's reserve is similar in spirit to that made of Jane's in Pride and Prejudice.[62] The substance of Mudrick's argument is that, in embodying her ideals in Fanny, Austen fails to do justice to her art, which in Mudrick's view is her irony, by allowing art to be superseded by her ideals. He objects particularly to the ending where Austen manipulates the plot to achieve a favourable outcome for Fanny and Edmund at the expense of Mary and Henry Crawford. A.C.Bradley, although more sympathetic to Mansfield Park than Mudrick, also fails to see any charm in Fanny. "We can

[62]Marvin Mudrick, Irony as Defense and Discovery (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952) 179.

admire and respect Fanny, but do we care about her?", he asks.[63] Bradley argues that we should care about characters, that we should be emotionally sympathetic towards them, as we are towards Elizabeth Bennet and Emma, as well as admire them as studies. The two critics' judgements of Fanny echo those made of Jane Fairfax and Edward Ferrars from within the novels: that the inwardly virtuous character requires an open and spirited manner to endear him to others.

These arguments, both from within and without, emphasize the importance of behaviour as a means of determining character, and they constitute a natural and justifiable objection to reserve. Austen wishes to draw our attention to the social problem created by each character who exhibits reserve. But behind the social problem lies a moral question which is obscured if our concern is too much with the expression of virtue rather than with the actual condition of the soul. Lionel Trilling in his essay "Mansfield Park"[64] argues that many objections to Austen arise from "feral repulsion at her attempts to impose restraint on the individual spirit". Our impulse, as Bradley says, is to prefer Austen's livelier heroines--Elizabeth and Emma--to the less animated Fanny and Anne Elliot, who seem debilitated by comparison. Trilling's defence of Fanny and Anne begins by attempting to trace an association in Austen's mind between Christian virtue and debility. He contrasts the debility of Fanny with the spiritedness of Mary and Henry Crawford, representing the modern type who adopt the style of sensitivity, virtue and intelligence, but who are trapped in merely expressing the style. This theme is symbolized by the seemingly trivial incident over the staging of Lovers' Vows at Mansfield, which Fanny alone refuses to act in. Trilling incorrectly attributes Fanny's stance to the belief that impersonating inferior characters harms the self.[65] The objections articulated by Edmund (*MP*, 112-14) seem to be those most

---

[63]A.C. Bradley, "Jane Austen" in A Miscellany (London: Macmillan, 1929) 62.
[64]Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park" in The Opposing Self (New York: Viking Press, 1955) 217.
[65]There is no reason why Austen should hold this view, if indeed it is her own view expressed through Fanny's opposition. We know that she joined in her own family's amateur theatricals, and there is no evidence of her distaste for acting. As a piece of circumstantial evidence, Dr Johnson's ridiculing of the view that acting harms the soul recorded by Boswell might attest that it did not have much currency. James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson ed. Bergen Evans (New

pertinent to Austen's critique of the actors. The first is that Maria's delicate situation with Rushworth may be compromised by her performing in a play that includes Henry Crawford; the second is that the staging of the play involves taking liberties with the decor of a room in the house; the third, and more interesting objection from the point of view of manners, is Edmund's belief that the education and upbringing of ladies and gentlemen makes their acting painful to watch. Reared by a rigorous sense of decorum, they must struggle to overcome that stiffness so they can play a dramatic part effectively. Their dilemma is that they will either look foolish, or if they succeed, will be guilty of a breach of decorum. The actors intend not a few hours fun with a play that is at best risque; they fully intend to identify with their parts by way of carrying on their insidious flirtations. For these reasons, the episode is primarily a symbolic device aimed at criticizing those "lively" characters who are essentially posers. The thrust of the criticism is directed towards those whose activity is at odds with the actual condition of their souls; it is an argument not against activity itself but against unprincipled activity.

But the portrayal of Fanny in the early part of Mansfield Park should not be construed as a defence of debility or reserve. Austen does not defend reserve itself, but she does invite us to understand the circumstances causing oppression of spirits in those characters exhibiting the trait. In Fanny's case, while she tends to be reserved by nature, external factors also contribute. Fanny's status at Mansfield is ambiguous from the start, thanks largely to Mrs Norris' influence. Even Sir Thomas, despite his sense of justice, does not take into account the possible merits of his adopted daughter: she is destined because of her heritage to be regarded as inferior. That Fanny proves otherwise is the lesson learned by Sir Thomas. The Bertrams' judgement of Fanny gives us a clue to her behaviour and expectations. Her passivity is consistent with the status she receives, and her sense of propriety tells her that it is inappropriate to expect more. Yet privately she is angry at the injustice of a situation which would force her to take a subsidiary role in Mansfield because of her heritage. This sense of justice allows her to take a firm stand on what she believes to be right--when she refuses to

---

[43](cont'd) York: The Modern Library, 1952) 483. The view originates in Plato's The Republic Trans. F.M.Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941) 83.

act in the play, when she refuses the hand of Henry Crawford in spite of the cajoling of the Bertrams and Mrs Norris.

The opprobrium with which Fanny's refusal of Henry is met entails that in the eyes of others she has no rights. Fanny is torn between her genuine concern not to offend Sir Thomas and her inability to speak openly of her perceptions of Henry's character because of the fear of compromising Maria.

> Maria and Julia--and especially Maria, were so deeply implicated in Mr Crawford's misconduct, that she could not give his character, such as she believed it, without betraying them. She had hoped that to a man like her uncle, so honourable, so good, the simple acknowledgement of a *dislike* [Austen's emphasis] on her side, would have been sufficient. To her infinite grief she found it was not. (*MP*, 287)

It may be ingenuous of Fanny to believe that she can escape accounting for her refusal of a seemingly honourable proposal by a simple expression of dislike. Sir Thomas thinks her marvellously lucky to get an offer and cannot conceive she has private feelings against Henry. Sir Thomas does, however, allow Maria an opportunity to express her feelings when he interviews her before the marriage to Rushworth. The difference in status between Maria and Fanny makes it imperative that her preferences are consulted before a decision is made on her future. Sir Thomas' inconsistency is the indirect cause of Fanny's dilemma in the Crawford episode: where Fanny must account for herself, Maria could have simply expressed her *dislike*. The eventual point made by the novel is that Fanny can emerge from her reserve only when she is accorded a fair and just position in the household.

Jane Fairfax's manners are similarly oppressed by her clandestine engagement to Frank Churchill: an oppression worsened by Frank's coldness towards her in public. Jane's melancholy is due to the uncertainty of her future, and it is with recognition of the unfavourable impression created by her reserve that she tells Emma at the end of the novel: " I know what my manners were to you--So cold and artificial!--I had always a part to act--It was a life of deceit! I know that I must have disgusted you" (*E*, 417-418). And in Edward Ferrars we see a reserve also caused by his secret engagement which seems to threaten his

future happiness; his reserve, like Jane's and Fanny's, is softened by the prospect of his marriage to Elinor. In each case, then, reserve is the result of melancholy which is caused by external circumstances; yet while each character is blameless, Austen does not ask us to think of reserve as an admirable or saintly quality, but as antisocial behaviour which each character must eventually regret.

While reserve constitutes a withdrawal from full social contact, the excess of openness involves the appearance of social ease that conceals an ulterior motive. This is a type of dissimulation differing in degree from the excess of amiability because the ulterior is almost entirely unfathomable from the character's behaviour. In addition, the ulterior motive is avarice, whereas that involving the latter is self-indulgence. To the category of dissimulators belong Willoughby, Wickham, and William Elliot. Each of these characters is initially fascinating to and sexually attractive to the heroine of the respective novels, but the ulterior motive is in each case revealed by someone with information about their true character. In the first two cases, the informants--Darcy and Brandon--eventually usurp the place of the dissimulator in the affections of the heroine (joint heroine in the second case); in Persuasion, the informant against William Elliot is Mrs Smith, and the other difference here is that the attraction of Elliot for Anne is very slight. In each instance, the informant has a personal grudge against the dissimulator; in the first two, he has attempted to seduce a young girl under the protection of the informant primarily for financial gain. Both Darcy and Brandon have reason to be jealous of the dissimulator; although Wentworth is not the informant, he has reason to feel jealous of Elliot and eventually wins Anne in Elliot's place. Wickham, Willoughby and Elliot all potentially stand in the way of the true happiness of the heroine and must be removed before the final unions take place. To characterize them generally, we can call these men "gallants" in two senses mentioned by Johnson in The Dictionary: "a whoremaster, who caresses women to debauch them; a wooer; one who courts women to marry them" (Vol.2). Wickham and Willoughby debauch women because they attract them under false pretences, and legally and morally this is an act of debauchery. Elliot is not guilty of debauchery, but he is similarly guilty of betrayal of trust.

Nowhere in the literature on Sense and Sensibility is Willoughby's character and Austen's condemnation of it fully understood, primarily, it seems, because he is able to present himself as a passionate man. But, despite the passion he displays for Marianne, passion itself is not the motive that controls his character. He is capable of showing passion when there is nothing present to conflict with self-interest, but by that very fact he cannot have the true romantic disposition of Marianne. Romantic sensibility seeks spiritual salvation through an intensified sense of beauty; it is a way of seeing and a way of living--one cannot be a romantic and a dilettante. Dilettantism characterizes Willoughby's professed passion for nature and art. He is essentially a dabbler in art as well as in love, and it is quite wrong to assume that because he appears chastened later on in the novel that he is essentially what he seems to be in the earlier part. His regret is due mainly to his unfortunate choice of marriage partner and partly to his recognition of Marianne's genuine love, something he himself can never achieve. He can recognize her love and what it stands for, but he cannot emulate it. By the end of the novel, we learn that he is able to reconcile his loss with his domestic comforts. That his loss is not irreconcilable is Austen's way of showing her contempt for him.

Willoughby's manners appear to be open and easy, but the clue that there is more to his character than this openness implies is not taken up, even by Elinor, who nevertheless observes early on in their acquaintance a shortcoming in his manners.

> In Mrs Dashwood's estimation, he was as faultless as in Marianne's; and Elinor saw nothing to censure in him but a propensity, in which he strongly resembled and peculiarly delighted her sister, of saying too much of persons or circumstances. In hastily forming and giving his opinion of other people, in sacrificing general politeness to the enjoyment of undivided attention where his heart was engaged, and in slighting too easily the forms of worldly propriety, he displayed a want of caution which Elinor could not approve. (*SS*, 41-42)

Although obviously not a heinous fault, it is one Willoughby shares with Wickham, his counterpart in Pride and Prejudice. In Austen's fiction, an offence against propriety in someone who seems otherwise rational and agreeable, can indicate that there is something

more profound amiss: this is true primarily of both the dissimulators and the "aimable". Elinor's complaint against Willoughby here is, unknown to her at the time, an observation of his egotism and self-indulgence, faults which cause him to turn to seduction and manipulation. His freedom in giving his opinion of others allows him, without causing much suspicion, to disparage Colonel Brandon, who harbours a legitimate grudge against him. Marianne's own lack of caution is not similarly motivated. Her motives are not ulterior at all; rather, her passion decides when she shall speak. Willoughby is undoubtedly clever, but it is a cleverness that always has an eye for self-interest. His is not a moral intelligence because he can never act on moral principles even though he may theoretically understand what right principles are. This is Willoughby's downfall and is the only source of sympathy we should entertain for him. His is the tragedy of Aristotle's akratic, who knows the good in principle but is unable to act under its influence. To realize that there is a superior form of happiness available to rational beings, but to be unable to attain it, is the worst fate that Austen metes out to her characters, with the possible exception of Maria Bertram having to live with her shame in isolation with Mrs Norris.

Although Wickham's story is close to Willoughby's--they are both unscrupulous and avaricious seducers--his is the more ugly. There is something inveterate about Wickham's self-indulgence that makes his complacency of manner more odious than Willoughby's dilettantism. Wickham blatantly uses his plausible manners to insinuate himself into the unsuspecting community at Meryton. His case emphasises the social danger that the dissimulating character represents. While there should be a tempering of the true self in the interests of social harmony, manners should at least give us a clue to the true self. There should be a legitimate connection drawn between the appearance of virtue as revealed through manners and the actual state of the soul. To make this connection is an act of trust; we need, for the sake of harmony, to accept more or less at face value what we can infer from the particular form of manners adopted. If a person appears to be concerned about the well-being of others, we ought to assume that he is concerned. Yet this type of candour is often shown by Austen to be deficient. Because of the possible discrepancy that exists between manners

and true self, Austen prizes highly the discriminating mind. On the other hand, we ought not, in Austen's view, to be so suspicious that we continually refuse to make the connection normal candour demands we make. The possibility of a mean between gullibility and suspicion is one that Pride and Prejudice contemplates. Wickham is someone who exploits natural candour and thereby disrupts the process of making legitimate inferences based on behaviour.[46] To give this a broader implication, Austen portrays Wickham as a kind of demon whose presence reminds us that we live in a fallen world and must be uneasy about the trust we extend to others.

In Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth Bennet, who prides herself on her ability to discriminate, is fooled by Wickham, not because of candour but because she makes the less pardonable mistake of confusing a beautiful body with a beautiful soul. That she is attracted to Wickham is her excuse, because she does not make the same mistake with Caroline Bingley. Yet in the early part of her acquaintance with Wickham, she makes the kind of mistake her sense of discrimination should forbid. It is not even that the confusion is the result of unconscious association, for she privately avows when talking to Wickham: "A young man, like you, whose very countenance may vouch for your being amiable " (*PP*, 72); and she publicly states to Jane: "Besides, there was truth in his looks"(*PP*, 77). What she fails to see in Wickham at this point is the same kind of false openness that Marianne fails to detect in Willoughby. After reading Darcy's letter, Elizabeth contemplates the openness with which Wickham communicates his grievance against Darcy at their first meeting.

> She was now struck by the impropriety of such communications to a stranger, and wondered it had escaped her before. She now saw the indelicacy of putting himself forward as he had done...She remembered also, that until the Netherfield family had quitted the country, he had told his story to no-one but herself; but that after their

---

[46] A modern version of this question is posed by the philosopher H.P.Grice, whose "co-operative principle" in conversation attempts to articulate maxims of co-operation in conversation. If these maxims were not tacitly acknowledged, Grice argues, communication would be virtually impossible. H.P.Grice "Logic and Conversation", in Syntax and Semantics 111: Speech Acts eds Peter Cole and Jerry L.Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975) 41-58.

> removal, it had been everywhere discussed; that he had no reserves, no scruples in sinking Mr Darcy's character, though he had assured her that respect for the father, would always prevent his exposing the son. (*PP*, 184)

Wickham's openness, like Willoughby's, is motivated by sheer self-interest and is really a form of ignorance. Wickham does not understand the moral motivation behind the manners he adopts. He may appear clever as a manipulator of public opinion, but his cleverness can be challenged from one point of view. Wickham has a knack with manners, to borrow a term employed in Plato's Gorgias. Through Socrates, Plato distinguishes an art from a knack on the grounds that someone who practices an art knows how to give a full account of that art, whereas someone with a knack merely follows a routine or has a lucky aptitude for something.[67] Because manners can be a routine uninformed by principle, Wickham can use his knack to follow convincingly the prescribed form of behaviour, just as Plato's false rhetorician can speak plausibly of justice and injustice, good and evil without full understanding. As Mr Darcy says of Wickham: "Mr Wickham is blessed with such happy manners as may ensure his *making* friends--whether he may be equally capable of *retaining* them, is less certain" (*PP*, 82). By "happy", Mr Darcy means "lucky" or "felicitous"; that is, Wickham has a knack for making friends, but the insufficiency of his character does not allow him to keep them.

The same knack allows the manners of William Elliot in Persuasion to be a front for his schemes. Though more strictly orthodox in his manners than either Willoughby or Wickham, Elliot betrays to Anne a lack of warmth, which is not blameworthy in itself, but is enough to arouse her suspicions.

> Mr Elliot was rational, discreet, polished,--but he was not open. There was never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight, at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided imperfection. Her early impressions were incurable. She prized the frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so

[67] Gorgias, trans. W.C.Helmbold (Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1952) 22-26.

> much more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a careless thing, than of those whose presence of mind never varied, whose tongue never slipped. (*P*, 152-153)

Anne's views of Mr Elliot here provide a clue to the essential character of the dissimulators. Elliot does not, like Willoughby and Wickham, have ostensibly open manners: his guardedness is the clue to his real character, which is, as Mrs Smith says, "without heart or conscience"; Elliot is "a designing, cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself"(*P*, 187). Yet this also precisely describes Wickham and Willoughby, despite the appearance of openness they display. In other words, the dissimulators are not open at all, but secretly guarded. In two cases this guard is maintained by sham ease of manner, in the other by the ability to maintain presence of mind. In both cases we have excesses--an excess of openness and an excess of caution. As in other cases of excess, though, these characters do not exhibit the virtue to excess, but the excess conceals a defect.

Anne's words about openness show its full value when compared with reserve and dissimulation: we see in them the value Austen attaches to the possibility of complete trust whereby manners reflect character. There is no hint in what Anne says that openness is accompanied by a remarkable intelligence, and in contrasting it with dissimulation Austen shows that she values simple good nature more than the cleverness of the dissimulators. Openness is not the same as Darcy's frankness; indeed, Darcy is guilty of some of the faults Anne describes. He is capable of warmth, but this would hardly describe his behaviour in general. However, his stiffness is a defect of manner not of character, just as Jane Bennet's lack of animation in public is a defect of manner that does not reflect her true disposition. Mr Bingley's openness rather than Darcy's frankness is the model of openness. Those who feel that Bingley is not intelligent enough to exemplify a virtue should remember that in Austen's novels virtue cannot be associated with intelligence alone, and while it is true that Bingley's power of discrimination is not great, his type is valued for the conviviality it radiates. Early on in Pride and Prejudice, Bingley's openness is contrasted with Darcy's frankness.

> Bingley was endeared to Darcy by the easiness, openness, ductility of his temper, though no disposition could offer greater contrast to his own, and though with his own he never appeared dissatisfied...He [Darcy] was... haughty, reserved, and fastidious, and his manners, though well bred, were not inviting. In that respect his friend had greatly the advantage. Bingley was sure of being liked wherever he appeared, Darcy was continually giving offence. (*PP*, 13)

The three key terms describing Bingley are easiness, openness and ductility. Easiness denotes a relaxed, uninhibited manner--it is difficult to think of an open manner that is not at the same time "easy". This ease of manner produces a ductility of character, a trait that is not exhibited by those who fake openness. "Ductility" is not perhaps wholly complimentary; Bingley is shown to be too easily led, too reliant on the opinion of others. He is as overobliging as Darcy is uncompromising. One thing, though, stands out: while Darcy must soften his uncompromising nature, Bingley is not similarly obliged by the events of the novel to harden his ductility. In the community at Pemberley at the novel's end, his good nature is almost perfect for an idealized world, even though in the real world it can be potentially exploited.

While Austen feels that ductility is not always accompanied by great understanding, she values it primarily (as it is accompanied by openness and easiness) for its contribution to the relaxation and pleasure of the social occasion. At the first ball, Bingley obligingly dances--as Mrs Bennet relates--with most of the women. This is not fake gallantry; Bingley is fulfilling a responsibility to try to make sure no woman is left out if women are outnumbered by men. By refusing to dance with Elizabeth when she is forced to sit out two dances, Darcy not only slights her, but he is also remiss in his duty. This failure is not simply one of etiquette: the success of the evening depends on the participation of all of the party. For women in particular, whose movements are far more restricted than are those of men, the ball or party is a necessary relief from domestic tedium. In the following passage, we are shown how keenly anticipated is each ball.

> If there had not been a Netherfield ball to prepare for and talk of, the younger Miss

> Bennets would have been in a pitiable state at this time, for from the day of the invitation, to the day of the ball, there was such a succession of rain as prevented their walking to Meryton once...Even Elizabeth might have found some trial of her patience in weather, which totally suspended the improvement of her acquaintance with Mr Wickham; and nothing less than a dance on Tuesday, could have made such a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, endurable to Kitty and Lydia. (*PP*, 79).

Austen is not merely poking fun here, although one could argue that the picture of bored females requiring male society for their pleasure makes these women an object of ridicule. But as these are young, eligible women, they not surprisingly want male company and male attention. When Darcy refuses to offer them this attention, he is deliberately slighting them even though he believes it is dishonourable to associate with them. Again, this is Darcy's confusion between the thing itself and the form in which he sees it done. It is not dishonourable to be pleasing when social harmony is at stake, and here Bingley should be his model. Let us be fair, it is easier for Bingley than for Darcy to fulfill this role because Bingley is more naturally open; and, while Bingley is too undiscriminating in being obliging, Darcy is overdiscriminating to the point where he cannot properly discern the essential point in social behaviour.

What emerges about Bingley's gallantry is that it is not self-regarding because egotism is not his ulterior motive. While he obviously gains pleasure from the popularity that being obliging gains for him, he is always ready for the most part to consider the pleasure of others. By contrast, those who exhibit the other excess, those who are "aimable" as opposed to amiable, are primarily interested in self-gratification. There is a strong connection between the "aimable" and the dissimulators, the main difference being that the primary motive is egotism rather than avarice. The two examples from the novels are Henry Crawford and Frank Churchill. Of the two, Henry comes closer to pure dissimulation and, like the dissimulators, he is sexually debauched. But both men are financially secure and need not resort to outright dissimulation for financial gain. They are both self-indulgent men who are clever enough to adopt manners that make them attractive to women, and they are thus false

heroes who have the potential to win the heart of the heroine. Neither, though, has the power to captivate her; in this they resemble William Elliot, although they differ from him in that their primary motive is not greed and position. Crawford and Churchill are guilty of excess because their gallantry is merely perfunctory, motivated not by concern for others, but to make themselves look good.

Mr Knightley observes the distinction between the "aimable" and those who are amiable by pointing out to Emma that Churchill's qualities are "merely personal", reflecting only the self.

> "No Emma, your amiable young man can be amiable only in French, not in English. He may be very "aimable", have very good manners and be very agreeable; but he can have no English delicacy towards the feelings of other people: nothing really amiable about him". (*E*, 134-135)

Although these comments are motivated by jealousy (Frank has not even made an appearance at this point), Knightley correctly anticipates in Churchill the "practiced politician" who is able to make everyone aware of his superiority. We have once again Plato's false rhetorician, who is able to please crowds, to give them what they came to hear: in short, we have the flatterer. In the Gorgias, flattery is linked to the notion of "the knack" because those with a knack are dabbling in mere decoration. Thus for Plato make-up is a knack whereas gymnastics is an art; the gymnast knows what is good for the body, but the make-up artist just conceals its defects.[41] In the same way, the "aimable" character pleases his audience, not with a view to their own good but in a way that will flatter them and thus reflect well on himself. The truly amiable man, like the gymnast, has an eye to the good, and he will dispense his attentions to those who need them and who will benefit by them. He does not aim to be merely pleasing, and he will speak frankly where frankness is warranted, as Mr Knightley does to Emma. Knightley's remarks characterize the "aimable" when he foresees Churchill "dispensing his flatteries around, that he may make all appear like fools compared with himself!" (*E*, 135). When Knightley rebukes Emma, he treats her as a rational being

---

[41]Gorgias, 26.

capable of improvement; when Churchill flatters her vanity, he makes her look foolish when nothing comes of their open flirtation. The flatterer is in the position of superiority because he is secretly hoodwinking the person he flatters.

Churchill and Crawford both prey on the vanity of certain women, and, particularly in Crawford's case, their attentions are also determined by the need to service their own vanity. Henry's wooing of Fanny is a surprising development in Mansfield Park because of the contrast in their temperaments and because there had been almost no contact between them prior to Henry's initial departure. Henry's motivation becomes less surprising when he tells Mary that his quest for Fanny's heart is a way for him to occupy his mind for a fortnight. Henry's vanity cannot countenance that Fanny could be insensitive to his "charm" and flattery. Indeed, she is vulnerable, as anyone with her degree of sensitivity would be to a man of Crawford's skill in manipulation; Fanny is not an immovable object, cold as stone. But Crawford cannot understand the depth of her resentment towards him because of his insidious flirtation with Maria and Julia. He does not understand that Fanny's objections to him are based on moral principle; they are not mere trifling objections of a petty mind offended by his lack of decorum. The point at issue is that he deliberately compromised a betrothed woman and teased her sister in the bargain, not because of any serious love or affection on his part, but because he wanted to amuse himself and test his powers of conquest. Fanny cannot therefore trust that there will be a correlation between what Henry professes and what he feels, so when he seriously falls in love with her, captivated by her superior mind, she cannot believe him to be serious.

> She considered it all as nonsense, as mere trifling and gallantry, which meant only to deceive for the hour; she could not but feel that it was treating her improperly and unworthily...but it was like himself, and entirely of a piece with what she had seen before. (*MP*, 272)

Fanny cannot depend upon Henry's seriousness because he has already failed the first test of a rhetorician, to gain the good will of his audience. Without this good will, however smooth and plausible his manners may be, the attentions of the flatterer are irksome. It is no defence

of Henry to say that he was, finally, capable of loving the right person; for a man like Henry, who like his counterparts is essentially a dilettante in life, love can be little more than infatuation. At least, it cannot be love in the sense that Austen wishes to convey, a love founded on the knowledge of the other's true self, not on the way another might present himself in public. This is a lesson all the heroines must learn in Austen's novels, that however temptingly a man might present himself, the final impression of him must rest on an understanding of his motives.

When we understand this principle in Austen, our suspicions should always be acute towards those who in public rarely put a foot wrong, who have no rough edges. Austen had a keen sense of the aesthetic quality of virtue, but this aesthetic element is not the same as that produced by the "dandyism" of characters like Crawford. Contrary to what Mr Knightley says of Churchill, there is a double sense of the English word "amiable". Johnson notes in his Dictionary that it means in one usage both lovely and pleasing, but pretending love or showing love in another. Austen never quite uses it in the first sense, but it is partly captured in Knightley's definition by the term "delicacy". Delicacy is an overall effect, for there are times when the truly amiable character must not always be pleasing. This fits well with Aristotle's idea that pleasure should not be given when it is dishonourable to do so. Amiability is not gallantry for its own sake, but has the well-being of its object in mind. Edmund Bertram, for example, shows tenderness towards Fanny after her arrival at Mansfield. His kindness is not required by common politeness, for her status does not demand that she be treated the same as others (as Mrs Norris clearly demonstrates). Edmund's attentions are therefore the product of sheer good heart and concern for the welfare of another. As to the rough edges of the amiable character, a trivial example from Mansfield Park shows this well. Tom Bertram, in conversation with Edmund and Mary, has just been discussing a Miss Anderson, who on "coming out" had behaved in too forward a manner towards him. Mary, having scorned Miss Anderson's behaviour, receives this reply from Tom.

> "Those who are showing the world what female manners *should be*", said Mr Bertram, gallantly, "are doing a great deal to set them right"

"The error is plain enough", said the less courteous Edmund; such girls are ill brought up". (*MP*, 44-45)

The example shows again the often ironic way Austen uses a value word. Edmund is "less courteous" because his impulse is not to employ gratuitous gallantry to please Mary, but to point out his moral objections to the young woman's behaviour. It makes Edmund sound rather priggish and it makes him risk losing his attractiveness to Mary. Mr Knightley runs a similar risk when he rebukes Emma on several occasions for her behaviour. So true amiability shows itself best in the concern that attentions be offered, not to reflect well upon the self, but to show concern for others even if that concern is not required by politeness. Mr Knightley's gallantry towards Harriet at the Weston's ball is amiability of this order--he was not required to help her by common courtesy, but he was prepared to act beyond the call of that very basic demand. Henry's gallantry on the other hand calls to mind Johnson's whoremaster gallant, one who courts women to debauch them. Strong words perhaps, but is not Henry's final act in the novel to debauch Maria Rushworth?

The understanding of others needs which characterizes amiability is wholly lacking in inoffensiveness, the lack of amiabiltiy in our scheme, not out of moral failing, but out of weakness of mind. When compared with the active, often corrective, nature of the amiable, inoffensive characters seem very timid. As a characteristic, it is closest to reserve, but has not the excuse of external oppression, being itself natural awkwardness and artlessness. Our specimen is Harriet Smith in Emma, for while she is pretty and good natured, she has no understanding of people and their differences. She is ready to forsake Robert Martin for Elton at Emma's prompting without really knowing what constitutes the real difference between them. She knows only that Elton is handsomer and richer than Robert. Knightley provides us with this assessment of her character.

> She is not a sensible girl, nor a girl of any information. She has been taught nothing useful, and is too young and too simple to have acquired any thing herself. At her age she can have no experience, and with her little wit, is not very likely ever to have any that can avail her. She is pretty, and she is good tempered, and that is all. (*E*,

55)

Knightley is not being mean here but is trying to convince Emma that Harriet is not an adequate companion for her. Harriet is artless, and while incapable of active harm, is also incapable of actively doing good. There can be no intellectual rapport between the two women, and Knightley is concerned that Emma needs a companion towards whom she will not feel superior. He feels that Harrriet's inferiority is a form of unintentional flattery.

> "She knows nothing herself, and looks upon Emma as knowing everything. She is a flatterer in all her ways; and so much the worse because undesigned. Her ignorance is hourly flattery. How can Emma imagine she has anything to learn herself, while Harriet is presenting such a delightful inferiority". (*E*, 33-34)

Harriet's "delightful inferiority" has the capability of being pleasing, but it is a passive capability in the way that a pretty ornament or a favourite pet is capable of pleasing. Rather than actively giving pleasure to others through a discriminating sense of their needs, Harriet is the recipient of the attentions of others, particularly of Robert Martin and Emma. Whereas the "aimable" is a male trait in Austen's novels, inoffensiveness is a female trait. It is visible in Isabella, Emma's sister, and in Lady Bertram, who are all pretty but vapid women.

Two major parallels between Austen and Aristotle emerge from this account of manners in the major novels: that Austen upholds the principle of the ulterior motive in determining what is virtuous behaviour and what is not, and that she sees virtue as action. The first parallel has been discussed at length in the course of the assessment of manners, but the second needs further explanation. Aristotle's notion of the action of a moral agent requires that he act from choice which is the result of deliberation; his action can thereby be called voluntary. More important from the point of view of morality, his action must be motivated by moral principle. In other words, he must act from practical wisdom. It should not be assumed that the term "practical" has any connection with pragmatic or judicious self-interest; as used by Aristotle, it means the way we bring ethical principle into being by action. By exercising practical wisdom, we will tend to find the mean in our ethical activity, and the more constantly we find it, the more virtuous we will become and the less

"calculated" our activity will be; the ability to be virtuous becomes instilled in us by habit, for we develop moral sensitivity through practice. The question of whether or not the virtuous actually tend to succeed in the real world is not one which Aristotle addresses in the Ethics, although we know that they will achieve happiness if success is measured by personal fulfillment. Success in the real world, however that is to be measured, is not guaranteed if vice and self-interest are allowed to flourish. This makes it imperative that the political system exercises justice. In a very minimal sense, the political system must allow the virtuous to survive; in a fuller sense, it must allow them to become exemplary figures in the community.

In Austen's novels no such system exists, and the triumph of virtuous characters is an act of plot manipulation by the author.[69] This manipulation is tied to her moral intent because she is creating an idealized world where only those characters with moral motivation are allowed to succeed. And "success" for Austen includes not only personal happiness, but elevation in rank and status.[70] Those whose primary motive is other than moral are never allowed the same success, and in some cases they are rendered less effective than they were originally. Thus Charlotte Lucas is for her pragmatism condemned to Mr Collins; Mr Collins and Mrs Bennet are condemned to futility;[71] and the dissimulators and "fine ladies" are condemned to have their schemes shattered. In the full Aristotelian sense, then, virtuous characters are allowed to act and in acting become effective in Austen's fictional world. The wider vision of life that the virtuous have makes them much more complex and their motives much less reducible to simple formula. Even a faulty heroine like Emma cannot be said to act from snobbery or some other single motive, for there are much more subtle undercurrents that affect her behaviour.[72] Austen generally allows no such subtlety of motive to her

---

[69]Mudrick notes as much contemptuously in his account of Mansfield Park. See Irony as Defense and Discovery, 165. By "manipulation" I do not intend to attribute underhand motives to Austen.

[70]This cannot perhaps be said to apply to Emma, who already has considerable status and prestige; however, her share of personal happiness is considerably increased and she potentially becomes more "respectable" in the community.

[71]While it is true that Mrs Bennet gets three of her daughters married, this happens in spite of, not because of, her.

[72]Robert Merrett argues that Emma is wilfully lazy, with the result that she cannot

unvirtuous characters, even for such good actors like Henry Crawford. The notion of acting applies particularly to those in the excess category, for in their case it is acting with the intent to deceive and create mischief. Their acting consists in playing the part through adopting appropriate manners, and they act as if they know what principles are involved in the role. Aristotle's description of the morally weak man is apropos here, for it very nearly captures the essence of Austen's "actors".

> Now it is clear that we must attribute to the morally weak a condition similar to that of men who are asleep, mad, or drunk. That the words they utter spring from knowledge (as to what is good) is no evidence to the contrary. People can repeat geometrical demonstrations and verses of Empedocles even when affected by sleep, madness and drink; and beginning students can reel off the words they have heard, but they do not yet know the subject. The subject must grow to be part of them, and that takes time. We must, therefore, assume that a man who displays moral weakness repeats the formulae (of moral knowledge) in the same way an actor speaks his lines (*NE*, 182-83).

As Aristotle suggests, "repeating the formulae" does not mean that knowledge is a part of these characters; it does not actually motivate their actions. They are trapped by pretense and cannot make the transition from acting to moral action; in Austen, only moral action finally leads to happiness and success. This entrapment is true of both the dissimulators, Wickham and Willoughby, of the gallants, of those who exhibit fineness like Lady Catherine and Caroline Bingley, even of less dangerous characters like Mr Collins and Mrs Bennet. The essential difference between the likes of Mr Collins and of Henry Crawford is that the former do not act with the same degree of finesse.

The notion of acting in the full moral sense raises also the question Aristotle poses about voluntary and involuntary action. Aristotle refuses to excuse the morally weak and morally corrupt on the grounds that they cannot help what they do, and Austen appears to

---

[71](cont'd) strike a balance between imagination and understanding, perceptual and rational ideas. Eventually she must realize "the condition of being human in an ethical, as distinct from psychological, manner". R.Merrett, "The Concept of Mind in Emma", English Studies in Canada, 5, 1. (Spring 1980) 39-55.

share that view. The point at issue is the original choice in life, and even though, as Aristotle says, it may be that the morally corrupt can no longer help themselves after they have chosen vice over virtue, they were capable at the beginning of making the right choice. However, for her part Austen wants to draw a distinction between those who are corrupted through weakness of mind (usually those in the "lack" category) and those corrupted by selfishness and disregard for others. Weakness of mind should be seen as more of an external impediment and therefore less blameworthy than cleverness which calculates its personal advantage. The distinction is visible, for example, in the relationship between Lady Catherine and Mr Collins; he is so dependent on her approval that, as John Odmark remarks, he seems to "discover his own identity" in her.[73] Austen speaks of Collins as the product of a naturally weak mind corrupted further by upbringing and inferior society. His moral understanding is thus very weak, and he has entirely adopted his associates' narrow view of life. In his narrowness he is not as single-minded as Mrs Bennet because he can never act of his own volition. Both characters, though, possess an understanding almost entirely determined by external appearance. Mrs Bennet is "a woman of mean understanding, little information and uncertain temper...the business of her life was to get her daughters married" (*PP*, 3). She chooses ends of a very low order, but strictly speaking she does not choose at all. The opening of Pride and Prejudice makes clear that hers is a "knee-jerk" reaction; she sees automatically a rich, eligible bachelor as a mate for one of her daughters. Her reaction resembles what Aristotle calls a nonrational capacity: she spontaneously ignites with the right catalyst. Ultimately her schemes fail because they cannot effectively operate in the idealized world Austen creates, a world which demands that its players not merely act, but *be*.

*Being*, therefore, is the true self which underlies the part played in social roles; it is the state of the soul or the virtues of character. The true self is the centre of being and its external manifestation is the mannered behaviour of the character. In some, the external manifestation is so primary that it appears to overshadow the true self so that the difference is blurred. For Austen, this is the result of behaviour unmotivated by the moral principles

[73] John Odmark, An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981) 150.

upon [redacted] the state of the soul is constituted. The motives of unprincipled characters are so completely dominated by achievement in a purely external way that the inner self is undeveloped and exists only as potential. In some of these characters the potential is greater than in others, but in both the soul is undernourished. Those readers who believe Austen to be obsessed with manners should compare her vision of humanity with this behaviourist vision:

> The learned repertoire of roles is the personality. There is no "core" personality underneath the behaviour and feelings; there is no "central" monolithic self that lies beneath the various external manifestations...the "self" is a composite of many selves, each of them consisting of a set of self-perceptions, which are specific to one or another major role, significant to the expectations to one or another significant reference group.[74]

Sounding as it does like a personality sketch of Mr Collins, this author's view would undoubtedly have made Jane Austen chuckle, for it is precisely when human beings are reduced to role-playing uninformed by moral principle that her scorn is unleashed.

---

[74]Orville E. Brim, Jr., "Personality Development as Role-Learning" cited by A.Walton Litz, "A Development of Self: Character and Personality in Jane Austen's Fiction" in Jane Austen's Achievement, ed. Juliet McMaster (London: Macmillan, 1976) 68.

## IV. The Virtues of Character

When we speak of an "inner" or "private" life in Jane Austen's characters, we are not speaking of states of mind that exist to be explored for what can be revealed about unconscious or subconscious motivation. Her characters do, at times, "explore themselves"--as Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse do--but the exploration is limited to past conduct and to the factors which influenced that conduct. When Elizabeth, for example, says: "Till this moment I never knew myself" (*PP*, 185), she is reflecting on how her behaviour towards Darcy has been motivated by vanity instead of reason; in other words, she has sought the underlying principle governing her conduct. Once she has discovered what ought to motivate her, she is able to amend her conduct and act as a full moral agent, which includes adjusting her manners towards certain individuals (notably Wickham). To understand what underlies Austen's picture of correct motivation, we must appeal to another Aristotelian distinction: that between internal and external goods. The distinction is complicated by its relationship to what constitutes the good for the individual and for the community in which he acts as moral agent.

The reason why the inner life of Austen's characters cannot be seen as private psychological states is that they never fulfill themselves qua individuals, but as members of a community. The idea of community is only fully realized when attached by Austen to some notion of institution, where "institution" can be broadly defined. Thus in Persuasion, ethical life is at its full in the community of friends; not only is Anne Elliot oppressed in the company of her father and elder sister, but also she is isolated, forlorn, and ineffectual. In Pride and Prejudice, the institution which determines the happiness of the main characters is marriage; in Mansfield Park, it is the estate; and in Emma it is the village as a community.[75] This is not to say that marriage is not important in Emma or in Mansfield Park, or that the estate is not important in Pride and Prejudice, but that each novel emphasizes one particular institution. Emma's marriage to Mr Knightley, for example, is important in its own right,

[75]Northanger Abbey and Sense and Sensibility leave undeveloped the relationship between individual and institution, primarily because they are dominated by other concerns. Thus while Sense and Sensibility is about what the title says it is about, Pride and Prejudice is really about manners and marriage.

but, because of the terms laid down in the novel, its primary importance lies in its allowing Emma to take her rightful place in the community of friends who inhabit Highbury. And, in marrying Edmund, Fanny realizes her rightful place as the spiritual mistress of Mansfield Park because she alone has consistently borne its ideals. But whatever institution is emphasized, the completed vision from these novels is one of a community of like-minded friends.

This vision constitutes the utopian perspective of her novels whereby, at the end of each, her ideal becomes embodied in the predominant institution.[76] At the beginning of each novel, then, the ideal remains hidden in the future. Austen makes an initial separation between her heroine and the institution to which she rightfully belongs because her plots depend on this more or less conscious quest of the heroine to find happiness within it; the quest is more conscious in Fanny Price than in Emma, but even in Fanny it is not a matter of status. Fanny is not driven to seek equal status to the Bertrams because she believes she is their equal in rank; rather, she upholds the ideals which most of the Bertrams have forsaken and through that is vindicated by the circumstances of the novel and elevated in rank. Austen

---

[76]I use the term "utopian" in the technical sense employed by the Marxist critic Georg Lukacs. For him, the utopian element in fiction relives, if only as a mental construct, the type of social harmony envisaged by Greek philosophy and illustrated by Greek epic; this element provides a reference point from which a critique of bourgeois individualism may proceed.

> On the one hand we still find a bourgeois-progressive perspective...which is rooted in, and does not look beyond, bourgeois society. But on the other hand there is a deeply felt need to go beyond the mere affirmation of existing conditions, to explore values not to be found in present society--values which come to be thought of, necessarily, as hidden in the future. Thus the utopian perspective serves a double function: it enables the artist to portray the present age truthfully without giving way to despair. The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin, 1963) 61.

In Austen's novels, the presence of the utopian vision gives the action its goal and provides the possibility of resolution of the conflicts of each novel. The vision of the future life of the community of friends does not allow exploration of potential problems (otherwise the novels would not end). Marriage, for Austen, is part of the resolution only in so far as characters can find happiness in marrying. It would be foolish to believe that Austen saw marriage in real life as a resolution of life's conflicts, or that she aimed to deceive readers into believing that marriage automatically solves their problems. The utopian resolution is consistent with the aim of her novels, to look beyond events which resemble the true affairs of the world to a vision of the future where conflicts are resolved.

therefore equates the institution with its members: when they betray the ideal, it is compromised too, even though it still exists as an ideal. Austen may appear here close in spirit to Burkean conservatism, where Burke in "Letter to a Noble Lord" declares that no separation can be made between an institution and the body of opinion that constitutes it. "The thing itself", he says, "is a matter of inveterate opinion, and cannot therefore be a matter of mere positive institution".[77] Burke's point is made in opposition to the Republican constitution of France: inveterate opinion cannot be changed by legislation alone. The conservative caution is against changing the institution on paper without regard to the change of heart needed among its members. But, while Austen would have applauded Burke's cautious approach to change (hers is essentially a notion of change from within), she is able to envisage positive institution (but not *mere* positive institution) in the achievement of virtue by its members. Austen is unconcerned with "inveterate opinion" when that opinion is foolish or immoral, and she is capable in her novels of casting out those in the institution who fail to measure up to virtue. Burke, on the other hand, is inclined to believe that the institution would be dismantled if its unworthy members could not be tolerated. In Burke, the burden of suspicion falls on the institution; in Austen, it falls on the institution's members. This is why the utopian element is alive in Austen, while in Burke it is firmly rejected.[78]

Let me return to the point about Fanny's recognition at Mansfield: had she sought merely status or rank she would be seeking external goods; as it happens, her achievement of status is a recognition of her moral worth, so her quest is one of seeking internal goods. The distinction between external and internal goods is originally Aristotle's and is developed by

---

[77]Edmund Burke, "Letter to a Noble Lord" in Eighteenth Century English Literature, eds. Tillotson, Fussell, et al. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969) 1307.

[78]Austen, that is to say, can use ideals as mental constructs which serve as criticism of the world of conflict she depicts. By contrast, Burke believes that ideals cannot legitimately be established aside from actual political practice. In his criticism of the levellers, he says: "they load the edifice of society by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground". Reflections on the Revolution in France ed. Thomas Mahoney (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1955) 55-6. Austen is a leveller in a sense I will later qualify, but her ideals are not abstracted from human life into "nowhere". Her Aristotelianism is idealistic, but rooted in ethical potential gleaned from ethical practice.

Alisdair MacIntyre.[9] Aristotle distinguishes what is sought as means to an end and what is a final end or *telos*. According to Aristotle, the final end must be internal to a person and an excellence in him which enables him to function well as a human being. This end is happiness in the special sense Aristotle attaches to that word. For now, the important point to emphasize is that happiness is not bestowed from the outside but is an achievement gained from leading a good life. Unlike rank or birth, which are conferred on us, we realize happiness through our actions, and we perform the right actions because of what we are. In his elaboration of Aristotle's account, MacIntyre defines internal goods as intrinsic to activities through which an individual tries to achieve standards of excellence appropriate to that activity.[10] To seek internal goods from an activity is to value it for its own sake rather than for any personal rewards that may accrue. To seek external goods, on the other hand, is to seek rewards external to an activity, for example, power, money, or fame. Austen's virtuous characters tend to seek internal goods over external goods, which is not to say that they are always oblivious to external goods. Elizabeth Bennet shows an awareness of external goods, for example, when she contemplates how she could have been mistress of Pemberley had her relationship with Darcy been different. Neither Austen nor Aristotle are claiming that human beings are or should be indifferent to external goods; as MacIntyre says, the moral impact on the community depends on a just proportion of individuals seeking internal goods over external goods. [11] Those who have sought and gained internal goods may wish to be admired for it and be elevated to a position of rank and authority in the community. The morally relevant difference between the two types of good, though, is that external goods are usually restricted in quantity and individuals must compete for them; internal goods everyone can potentially acquire, and their attainment is co-operative rather than competitive because they cannot be attained in isolation. But here the virtuous activity of the seeker of internal goods may be at odds with the usual practice of the community or institution to which he or she belongs. We see this most acutely in the case of Fanny Price, who is forced to be virtuous

[9] After Virtue, 190-2.
[10] After Virtue, 190.
[11] After Virtue, 181-203.

in isolation with the result that she seems priggish and ineffectual at the beginning of the novel. She is able to realize herself only on the inside, and she remains undeveloped because she cannot act in a world which seems to her, like it seemed to Hamlet, "an unweeded garden". [12]

To summarize, the utopian element in Austen's novels is realized when at the end the heroine takes her rightful place as a member of a community, which, loosely speaking, takes the form of an institution and which can be a "positive institution" only if its members practice virtue. The question remains: to what extent are the heroines consciously pursuing this goal as a quest, which, although firmly set in the author's mind, does not seem at all evident in theirs? To answer this question, we need to recall Aristotle's distinction between voluntary action and characteristics. Aristotle argues that moral action proceeds from choice and choice from deliberation; this is the way in which our actions are voluntary. Now, in explaining his notion of characteristics, he says that our actions and characteristics are not voluntary in the same sense.

> We are in control of our actions from beginning to end, in so far as we know the particular circumstances surrounding them. But we control only the beginning of our characteristics: the particular steps in their development are imperceptible, just as they are in the spread of a disease; yet since the power to behave or not behave in a certain way is ours in the first place, our actions are voluntary (*NE*, 68).

As virtue is a characteristic, we attain it imperceptibly: our actions are the result of conscious

---

[12]MacIntyre sees the relationship between virtue and institution somewhat differently than Austen. He argues that while activities cannot be divorced from institutions, the institution has a corrupting power on activities because it is essentially concerned with external goods--acquiring money, establishing power and status, issuing rewards.

> Institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context, the essential function of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of the institutions. ( After Virtue, 181).

The difference between this view and Austen's is that Austen thinks corruption is in the individuals who control institutions. She does not see *mere* institution itself as a corrupting force; rather, the institution can be corrupted by its members, as, for example, the estate can be by the improvers.

choice, and as we act in accordance with virtue, we come to have the characteristics of a virtuous person. Virtue, then, is consistency, but it is not in itself a matter of choice--we do not actually choose to *be* virtuous, but we do choose the means to virtue. Furthermore, we become happy through the practice of virtue, and so happiness itself is not something we choose; it is something we wish for and can attain if we choose the right means.

In the same way, Austen's heroines choose the right actions, but they do not choose the happiness that is their reward at the end of each novel. Fanny Price cannot be seen to strive consciously for her rightful place in Mansfield, neither can Elizabeth be seen to struggle consciously to win Darcy. If this were the case, both would be seen to be pursuing external goods rather than internal goods. They do, however, choose the means that eventually lead to their happiness. It might be argued that this forces the heroine into a passive position: that where Elizabeth, for example, cannot pursue Darcy, he can pursue her. The point, though, is that Darcy wins Elizabeth when he proves to her his own worthiness. His first attempt to win her hand is unsuccessful because she believes him to be unworthy. Darcy cannot choose Elizabeth, but he can choose the means whereby he can eventually marry her and find his own happiness. Darcy's initial mistake is to assume that he can choose her regardless of how she might feel about him. But, while we cannot consciously choose happiness, Austen shows through some of her minor characters that we can choose the rewards that external goods bring. Charlotte Lucas seeks security, so she chooses to accept Collins' offer of marriage as a way of getting security. As Elizabeth says, though, she cannot be happy in marriage because it cannot be based on mutual respect and esteem. For Charlotte, happiness is a matter of chance, and she thereby denies herself the possibility of choosing means towards it. Because she never acts with this possibility in mind, she is morally blind.

Charlotte's case demonstrates that intelligence alone does not guarantee that someone can make the right choices that lead to happiness. As we explore the individual virtues, we will see that Austen's primary concern is to show how virtue is attained by a character having the right emotional attitude. Here again the connection with Aristotle's theory is marked because both believe that the virtuous person cannot be indifferent to emotion. This belief

goes to the heart of Aristotle's theory of the irrational virtues, for he emphasizes that virtue cannot be achieved in a cold, disinterested manner. A virtuous man should take pleasure in performing virtuous acts, but he also listens to reason "as one would listen to a father" (*NE*, 32). This is acting in accordance with reason as opposed to acting from reason: actions stemming from the irrational part of the soul do not have reason "contained within them", but they comply with reason (*NE*, 31). Thus, virtues of character are not rational per se, which does not mean they are unaffected by reason. Of the five "virtues of self" in Aristotle (again, this is my category, not his), the three that are directly relevant to Austen are self-control, gentleness, and high-mindedness. Courage and the nameless virtue between lack of ambition and overambition are strictly speaking male virtues in Aristotle's ethical system, and Austen seems to have little interest in them. Courage is concerned with behaviour on the battlefield and ambition is primarily concerned with seeking honours in civic matters. Ambition is also closely related to high-mindedness, and may be subsumed under that virtue. In Austen's novels, the three virtues corresponding to the relevant virtues in Aristotle are sensibility or temper, gentleness and self-esteem. A fourth virtue of character in Austen, but not in Aristotle, is candour; this word in its eighteenth-century meaning signifies a willingness to think well of people, or absence of malice.

Self-control in Aristotle's scheme is concerned with the pursuit of bodily pleasures--those pleasures we share with other animals.[13] The excess of self-control is self-indulgence, and a self-indulgent man is driven to seek his pleasures at the expense of everything else; he may even feel pain when his appetite for pleasure is aroused. Aristotle believes that the deficiency of self-control, self-denial, is scarcely ever found because "such insensitivity is not human" (*NE*, 80). The self-controlled man forms the mean between self-denial and self-indulgence mainly in his attitude towards the excess: he finds self-indulgence disgusting. The appetite of the self-controlled man is in accordance with reason, but not rational itself. By way of illustration, Aristotle offers the example that the

[13]Martin Ostwald, the translator of the Nicomachean Ethics, points out that self-control is a literal translation of *sophrosyne* or soundness of mind. It means not only "restraint", but also "mastery": a selfcontrolled man is called so "for not feeling pain at the absence of or abstinence from his pleasure" (80).

self-indulgent man finds delight in the actual sensation of eating and swallowing, while the self-controlled man delights in discriminating between tastes. Such discrimination is not an exercise of mind, but an exercise of the whole body: "For [the pleasure] of the self-indulgent is not [produced by] the touch of the whole body, but by the touch of some specific parts" (*NE*, 79). It would be hard to argue perhaps that whoever prefers beer to wine is less rational, but reason tells us it is preferable to drink wine because it offers a greater chance to exercise different taste sensations. Thus drinking wine is not more rational than drinking beer but more in accordance with reason. Aristotle adds that it is more human to desire taste than touch because beasts are excited by the mere touch of food in their mouths. Self-indulgence is clearly less civilized than self-control, and its main relevance here is that it allows us to more clearly distinguish the difference between acting in accordance with reason and acting due to reason.

When the virtue of self-control appears in Austen's novels, her concern is not so much with controlling bodily appetites, but with emotional self-control. While it is true that self-indulgent characters like Wickham and Willoughby are overly fond of their pleasures, Austen rarely dwells on this type of fault. In portraying the emotions, she wishes to emphasize the difference between those emotions allied to reason and those not. In dwelling on the control of bodily pleasures, Aristotle by contrast is particularly interested in what makes us human: as we are the only animals capable of self-control in accordance with reason, its exercise illustrates one of our distinctly human qualities. In literature, we see similar concerns raised in the comedy of humours, which forms a stinging rebuke of the "yahoo" in all of us by equating humours with particular animal traits. Austen, though, wishes to emphasize the anti-social consequences of self-indulgence; the real issue for her is to equate true emotion or true sensibility with regard for others.

Austen's view of self-control is made evident early on in Sense and Sensibility, a work which contrasts the emotional self-indulgence of Marianne, or false sensibility, with the true sensibility of Elinor. Many readers have felt that while Austen's rational self is on the side of Elinor, she is really at heart on Marianne's side. But this is to succumb to the false dichotomy

that the title invites us to entertain; as Mary Lascelles points out, Austen's dichotomy in Sense and Sensibility is not reason against emotion, but "false and true visions that lead to happiness".[14] In the following comparison of Elinor and Marianne, Austen makes it clear that their difference is not one of feeling but of control of feeling.

> She [Elinor] had an excellent heart; her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge which her mother had yet to learn, and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.
>
> Marianne's abilities were, in many respects, quite equal to Elinor's. She was sensible and clever, but eager in everything; her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation. She was generous, amiable, interesting: she was everything but prudent. The resemblance between her and her mother was great. (*SS*, 4-5)

The statement that Elinor "knew how to govern" her feelings is in line with Aristotle's notion of mastery, and Austen specifically calls it a form of knowledge which can be taught.[15] Marianne does not lack sense or intelligence ("she was sensible and clever"), but she lacks prudence or practical wisdom. Putting the remarks of this passage together: true sensibility is the ability, in accordance with reason, to be prudent about emotions, or, in Aristotle's terms, having the right emotions at the right time and in the right place. Marianne is indulgent because her emotions cannot be controlled; moreover, she does not *wish* them to be controlled. Her indulgence of feeling is *self*-indulgence because she considers her feelings and nothing else to be the moral focus of her being. For this reason, her attitude is willed and voluntary.

> Elinor saw, with concern, the excess of her sister's sensibility; but by Mrs Dashwood it was valued and cherished. They encouraged each other now in the violence of their

---

[14]Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939) 120.

[15]See the opening of Book Two of the Nicomachean Ethics, where Aristotle says that "intellectual virtue or excellence owes its origin and development chiefly to teaching, and for that reason requires experience and time" (33). Elinor, we learn, was raised largely under the tutelage of her father; Marianne was primarily influenced by her mother.

> affliction. The agency of grief which overpowered them at first, was voluntarily renewed, was sought for, was created again and again. (*SS*, 5).

Aristotle calls self-indulgence a more voluntary state than cowardice, for example, because self-indulgence is motivated by pleasure and cowardice by pain (we choose voluntarily what is pleasurable and avoid what is painful). The violence of Marianne's and Mrs Dashwood's affliction, though externally motivated originally, is "renewed" internally and recreated as desire. They actually want to indulge themselves. The external motivation thereby becomes a lost causal agent when the indulgence of emotion takes over as the prime cause. And this new cause becomes the object of their devotion: "They gave themselves up wholly to their sorrow, seeking increase of wretchedness in every reflection that could afford it, and resolved against ever admitting consolation in the future" (*SS*, 5). In other words, their "wretchedness" is the sufficient cause for emotion and no outside factor, no original or external cause, can affect the emotional state. It is left to Elinor to face the real cause. "Elinor, too, was deeply afflicted; but still she could struggle, she could exert herself. She could consult with her brother, could receive her sister-in-law on her arrival, and treat her with proper attention" (*SS*, 5). Elinor's prudence allows her to pay the minimal attention to the external cause of their grief that prudence demands. We are not supposed to feel unsympathetic to Mrs Dashwood's and Marianne's grievance against John and Fanny, but we are supposed to see through these passages that self-indulgence produces a state of mind which (to use Freud's terms) seeks only ego-gratification.

Austen uses here a perhaps trivial example of the lack of sense of reality that extreme emotionalism involves, but the tendency becomes more dangerously evident in Marianne's relationship with Willoughby, a relationship which almost brings about her death. We have already noted how important for Marianne are a man's manners. The actual state of his soul is not sufficient to arouse her ardour, for he must be animated, open, romantic in presenting himself. This in itself is not an unreasonable demand, but Marianne places too much importance on the appearance of sensibility and not enough on the inner self. Her attachment to Willoughby becomes, like her aversion to John and Fanny, emotionally self-justifying.

When Willoughby leaves for London, abandoning her for a rich heiress, Marianne reacts in a way which emphasizes the behavioural over the emotional. Her indulgence draws this sarcastic comment from the author.

> Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting with Willoughby. She would have been ashamed to look her family in the face the next morning, had she not risen from her bed in more need of repose than when she lay down in it. (*SS*, 71)

The romantic response to lost love is predictable, even contrived. But, as Marianne indicates earlier, the outer display of sensibility is so important for the romantic disposition. The display makes all the difference between a Colonel Brandon and a Willoughby, the one having all the virtue and the other all the appearance of it.

The value of self-control is that it prevents self-destructive behaviour and inhibits self-indulgent emotionalism. Austen's point is not that we should suppress emotions, but that we should not indulge them at the expense of everything else, and especially not at the expense of the feelings and well-being of others. Propriety means as much having an awareness of what is outside you as having practical wisdom: indeed, for Austen the two are closely linked. One can, of course, be practical merely to pursue external goods; but the pursuit of internal goods also requires a healthy sense of what is out there. And this latter sense is necessary to understand the feelings and concerns of others. To take the famous example of Emma's insult to Miss Bates at Box Hill: Emma here takes the opportunity to display her wit at the expense of someone in less fortunate circumstances than her own. The "Emma could not resist" (*E*, 335) implies her lack of self-control as much as her lack of true feelings for Miss Bates. The full significance of the episode is later provided by Mr Knightley when he chastises Emma for her conduct. Emma at first offers lack of self-control as an excuse--"how could I help saying what I did" (*E*, 339)--but Knightley insists on her seeing the social consequences of her action.

> "Were she a woman of fortune, I would leave every harmless absurdity to take its chance; I would not quarrel with you for any liberties of manner...But Emma...She

is poor; she has sunk from the comforts she was born to; and, if she live to old age, must probably sink more. Her situation should secure your compassion". (*E*, 339)

"Her situation should secure your compassion" is the telling sentence; Emma refuses to see Miss Bates' circumstances as reasons for giving *her* compassion, just as she refuses to acknowledge at first that Miss Bates fully understood the insult. Compassion is an irrational or emotional virtue, but it is directed towards another. And a full sense of the another's circumstances are needed for compassion to be exercised. This illustrates how in Austen the true virtues, while emotional, are stimulated by external causes. And the notion of compassion here speaks to the way in which regard for others--for the community, for the family, for friends, and for acquaintances--is a primary moral obligation in the novels.

As the mean between self-denial and self-indulgence, self-control is most opposed to the latter. Self-denial, as Aristotle says, is hardly human because it means that no emotion or desire is present. The issue in Austen, too, is about the social effect of emotion, not about its suppression or denial. And self-control, not self-denial, is the moral response to indulgence because without emotion we can have no heart to do what is right. This accords with Aristotle's belief that we must not only know what the good is but also want to do it and take pleasure in it. Without deriving pleasure from virtue, we may not want to be virtuous. Hugh Blair in his Sermons echoes Aristotle when he says that the sentiments and the affections must be brought to the aid of reason. Passions, he says, "arouse the dormant spirits of the soul". These passions, which Blair refers to under the rubric "temper", are not violent and erratic like the uninhibited passion of a Marianne, but are constant although just as intense. [16] Those of Austen's heroines who possess constancy--Elinor, Fanny, and Anne--are not required by the events of the respective novels to undergo internal change. Each of these heroines achieves constancy because she is able to be in control of her life, even if external circumstances

---

[16] Hugh Blair, "On the Government of the Heart" (Sermon xvii) in Sermons (Louisville: Lost Cause Press, 1964) 266. I cite Blair as another important source of Austen's concept of the virtues. Blair shares with Austen the concern that passion be a motivating force for virtuous action, but that it also be governed. Significantly, the virtues in Blair's writings are defined in relation to lack and excess.

threaten to disrupt it. [17] What is striking about these three heroines is their apparent lack of lively spirits which makes them seem, compared with Marianne, Elizabeth, and Emma, to lack charm. The virtue in question which underlies this quietism is gentleness, or what Blair calls the peaceful temper, that which is "desirous of cultivating harmony and amiable discourse".[18] The parallel virtue in Aristotle is also called gentleness by the translator, Ostwald, although there is no exact Greek term for those that occupy the median position between short-temper and apathy. Aristotle's primary concern is with feelings of anger, but in paralleling the virtue with Austen's we will be primarily concerned with feelings in general. The main point in Aristotle's analysis of this virtue is again the appropriateness of the emotion. He says that "those who do not show anger at things that ought to arouse anger are regarded as fools; so, too, if they do not show anger in the right way, at the right time, or at the right person. Such people seem to have no feelings" (*NE*, 101). Short-tempered people on the other hand "do not restrain their feelings of anger, but...retaliate in an open way and have done with it". The mean is achieved by not allowing oneself to be easily ruffled, and not being *driven* by the emotion, but to find the right occasion for justifiable anger.[19] Aristotle adds that a gentle person is more inclined to the deficiency because he is "forgiving rather than vindictive".

For her part, Austen sees gentleness as a counterpart to self-control: Fanny's and Elinor's quietism, Anne's stoicism, make them seem deficient in emotion because theirs is inner rather than expressive. This is why the emotions of Marianne and the emotions she demands in others are essentially mannered, while the emotions of Elinor, Fanny, and Anne

---

[17] Alisdair Macintyre considers constancy to be the primary virtue for Austen, arguing that it brings unity to a person's life so that he can uphold "the commitments and responsibilities to the future springing from past episodes in which obligations were conceived and debts assumed (which) unite the present to past and future in such a way as to make human life a unity". By contrast, MacIntyre argues, the aesthetic life which Marianne upholds dissolves into "a series of separate moments" (After Virtue, 242). MacIntyre elevates constancy because he wishes to explore the relationship between Austen's Christianity and her "Aristotelianism"; for him, constancy is a necessary prerequisite to the important Christian virtue of patience. However, in looking primarily at her Aristotelian side, constancy should be seen as a prerequisite of virtue: the virtuous person must consistently act in accordance with virtue to be called virtuous in the Aristotelian system.

[18] "Sermon xvii", 277.

[19] The difference here is between Elinor's reaction to Fanny and John and that of Mrs Dashwood and Mariannne.

reflect the actual state of the soul. Austen may also have been influenced here by Blair, who distinguishes between passion and virtuous emotion by referring to the soul. Temper, he says, is "the natural velocity of the soul...a sensibility of the heart towards the Supreme Being which springs from the deep impression of His goodness on the soul".[90] Gentleness is thus "inner", and as such appears not to be an emotion at all because emotion is naturally associated with passions expressed by agitated behaviour. This associative bias is perhaps too deeply ingrained for gentleness to appear as anything but complacency. Blair argues that passions tend to run to excess even though their object can sometimes be just: the passionate person tends to have a reaction in excess of the actual significance of the cause. For him, the gentle person has an intensity of feeling, but because there is sufficient control to allow reason a say, such a person tends to direct feelings towards appropriate objects. This is approximately the point Aristotle makes in his account of anger; he distinguishes between justifiable anger and anger directed inappropriately because a person is of a grouchy disposition. Justifiable anger is not manifested in intense passion, but actually resembles the deficiency or apathy.

Austen's depiction of this trait is best exemplified by the relationship between Fanny Price, Lady Bertram and Mrs Norris in Mansfield Park; it is the difference between a gentle disposition which sees and resents injustice, an apathetic one which sees nothing and is moved by nothing, and a bustling and officious energy that is moved by trivial things. Lady Bertram's apathy has grave consequences for her family because it involves in effect surrendering the upbringing of her daughters to Mrs Norris. The following passage illustrates how Lady Bertram's languor denies her the normal pleasures of motherhood as her daughters emerge into society, and how Maria's and Julia's progress is left to the mean-spirited attentions of Mrs Norris.

> Lady Bertram did not go into public with her daughters. She was too indolent even to accept a mother's gratification in witnessing their success and enjoyment at the expense of any personal trouble, and the charge was made over to her sister, who

[90] "Sermon xvii", 276.

> desired nothing better than a post of such honourable representation, and very thoroughly relished the means it afforded her of mixing in society without having horses to hire. (*MP*, 30)

While Lady Bertram is harmless and good-natured in herself, her apathy causes harm by default. She sees no evil in Mrs Norris and is even grateful that her sister's officiousness means she does not have to exert herself. Lady Bertram's example shows that mere good nature is not enough, and although less blameworthy than the excess, is of such an extreme that she must be blamed, as Austen frequently blames her, for the consequences she indirectly causes. The abnegation of her responsibility as a parent is seen by Austen as a grave social fault: it is one shared by Mr Bennet and Mr Woodhouse. While Mr Bennet's abnegation is the result of disillusionment with his marriage, Mr Woodhouse and Lady Bertram fail through weakness of mind. Both in effect become children, mollycoddled and indulged by their families. The consequences of Lady Bertram's failure are greater, however. Emma, though selfish and spoilt, has a good mind and is guided by her true father figure, Mr Knightley. Maria and Julia have neither the mind nor the guidance, and their downfall and disgrace are the consequence.

The good nature exhibited by Lady Bertram is not shared by Mrs Norris, whose excess is not too much gentleness but too much malignity directed at the wrong person and over the wrong things. Such malignity is really a perversion of the justifiable feeling of anger or moral indignation. The excess of such indignation is not moral, but meddlesome and inappropriate. Thus Mrs Norris tends to get indignant, especially at Fanny's expense, over trivial matters such as whether Fanny should have a horse, whether the carriage should be called for her, or whether she should be allowed to accompany the family on outings. Mrs Norris' temper is manifested by misdirected energy and by her failing to take responsibiltiy for her actions. Her introduction of Fanny to Mansfield, for which she pretends to take responsibility, is her way of *showing* benevolence without actually *doing* anything benevolent. The supercilious manner in which she makes the proposals to bring Fanny to Mansfield is laced with clues that she will eventually evade any responsibility for Fanny's welfare. She tells Sir Thomas: "A niece of

*ours*, Sir Thomas, I may say, or at least of *yours*, would not grow up in this neighbourhood without many advantages" (*MP*, 4--Austen's emphasis). The not-so-subtle switch of pronouns foreshadows her later refusal to take Fanny in after an initial stay at Mansfield--a consequence which, for once, Fanny is able to welcome. Mrs Norris makes the initial arrangements and assumes responsibility for the whole event, whereas in reality she opts out after the initial arrangements are made. In common with Henry and Mary Crawford, the other characters in the novel who display energy in their affairs, Mrs Norris is motivated by appearances; her fate is to be preoccupied with the superfluities of the external world but finally to fail to make her mark in it. This is consistent with the way Austen denies those characters with a narrow view of life full effectiveness in the final outcome of events in her novels.

By contrast, Fanny and Edmund, who are motivated by moral principle, end up having a profound effect on the external world despite their initial lack of status. Their behaviour is not stylish and is sometimes a direct violation of style, seeming awkward and priggish. This trait in the two leading characters reflects the very nature of Mansfield Park itself. Lionel Trilling comments that the violation of style is the author's deliberate attempt to evoke a point: "For the sake of its moral life, it [the novel] must violate its own beauty by incorporating some of the prosy actuality of the world".[91] He might have said "prosy ideality", for the essential point is Austen's uncompromising refusal to acknowledge the real world's tendency to prefer style to substance. Fanny may not be lively in any conventional sense, but she is *alive*. Her intense internal life, in part forced on her by circumstances, enables her to see acutely principles of conduct that the activists who surround her are unable to see. She is able to recognize internal goods where her more stylish associates can see only external goods. One example of this occurs when Henry Crawford returns to Mansfield after Maria's wedding and speaks to Fanny at the Grants' dinner party with nostalgia about the theatricals.

"I shall always look back on our theatricals with exquisite pleasure. There was such

[91]Lionel Trilling, "Mansfield Park" in The Opposing Self (New York: Viking Press, 1959) 223.

an interest, such an animation, such a spirit diffused! Everybody felt it. We were all alive. There was enjoyment, hope, solicitude, bustle, for every hour of the day. Always some little objection, some little doubt, some little anxiety to be got over. I never was happier".

With silent indignation, Fanny repeated to herself, "never happier!--never happier than when doing what you must know was not justifiable!--never than when behaving so dishonourably and unfeelingly!--Oh! What a corrupted mind"! (*MP*, 203)

Fanny's silent, internal indignation in contrast to Crawford's open, high-spirited bravado, shows not only their difference in status, but also the difference in spirit between them. The difference in status is shown because Henry can declare his thoughts openly, while Fanny must remain silent. Also, Henry can openly boast of the theatricals in front of her, as if she did not matter, but not in front of Edmund, even though both were opposed. The difference in spirit is shown by Crawford's placing the external goods derived from the theatricals in disproportionate importance to the principles he violated. He places relief of boredom over his compromising of Maria and the hurt he caused Rushworth, her fiance. Crawford's statement "we were all alive" should be taken to carry the author's implied addition "yes, alive in an unprincipled, bustling and meaningless way". Henry is an example of what Stuart Tave calls "liveliness without life", and commenting on Henry's "we were all alive", Tave says:

> His lively words will change their meaning as he finds himself, unintentionally, coming closer to a better happiness, but it is true that he will never be happier. What he does not know is that his is a liveliness that becomes most interesting as it becomes, of its own necessities, self-defeating, ironic. The really interesting thing is that life is livelier than Henry realizes, lively with ironies. [9]

The irony, of course, is that his attempt to win a better happiness through his wooing of Fanny is doomed to failure. Satisfied for the most part with externalities--style without substance--he senses the finer possibilities in Fanny, but is unable to attain them because his

[9]Stuart Tave, Some Words of Jane Austen (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973) 165.

mind is tainted by the shallow pretense that has dominated his life. Henry's potential to achieve a higher form of happiness will never be realized because he has become an inveterate seeker of external goods; as Aristotle says, once a choice of life has been made, it may never be possible to avoid consciously the consequences of that choice. Henry is in one sense conscious of the alternatives in so far as he is able to see the possibility of a higher form of happiness (and such seeing is an intellectual capacity), but he cannot use his intellect to amend his moral character because the life he has chosen has become instilled by habit.

Looking at Henry's example from the point of view of Aristotelian ethics tells us that he has not fully realized his human potential. The case of Fanny, on the other hand, raises the issue of what exactly constitutes fully human moral activity for Austen and how her view contrasts with Aristotle's. Fanny's situation is comparable to that of the contemplative man in Aristotle's theory, and the contemplative life was for him the highest form of human activity. Aristotle reasons that the pursuit of intellectual goals--that is, the actual activity of studying and contemplation--is the only form of activity which is done for its own sake. The practice of virtue is done for the sake of happiness, but happiness itself is not an activity but a state of being. Moreover, studying is more self-sufficient than virtuous activity because it requires fewer external goods.

> Like a just man and any other virtuous man, a wise man requires the necessities of life; once these have been adequately provided, a just man still needs people towards whom and in company with whom to act justly, and the same is true of a self-controlled man, a courageous man, and all the rest. But a wise man is able to study even by himself, and the wiser he is the more he is able to do it. (*NE*, 289)

Aristotle uses the concept of the contemplative man to contrast a life that is close to divine in being wholly given up to intellectual activity with a life that is typically human. As a composite of mind and body, reason and desire, all but the contemplative will be driven by their strongest motivating force--the emotions. Although reason, through habit, tempers the emotions, the emotions in their tempered form still rule us. This is why, for Aristotle, the practice of virtue is not itself divine, but all too obviously human.

As for Fanny, her early life at Mansfield is almost entirely contemplative. She has a fine mind and a keen sense of discrimination, but it is allowed only internal play, for she does not have the necessary external goods--influence and rank--to make her views effective. This lack does not harm her intellectual abilities; on the contrary it enhances them. But she still suffers *as a human* from her inability to pass from internal contemplation to external activity. And Austen sees her position as unsatisfactory from the human point of view, which is why she has Fanny pass from the "divine" to the human, from contemplation to active participation in life. If we see this, we can more safely affirm the secular in Austen over the divine or religious. It is as if she were an Aristotelian without including that part of Aristotle's thought which would make men behave more like gods than human beings.

Fanny's gentleness is not from Austen's point of view wholly a blessing; nevertheless, Fanny provides a point of contrast because her judgements are informed by reason and principle. Moreover, Fanny's inability to judge openly because of her lack of status suggests Austen's awareness that moral authority and the authority granted by status and rank are quite different. If moral authority comes not from reason and the principles derived from reason, moral judgement is arbitrary or at best relative to the wishes of power groups. [11] This is best illustrated in Mansfield Park by the episode already discussed in another context: Fanny's refusal of Henry's offer of marriage. The repercussions of her refusal reflect Fanny's powerlessness to assert principle against the argument for self-interest. It shows the ineffectiveness of principle to engage approval in contrast to the rhetoric of self-interest, which Henry uses to make self-interest appear principled. When Sir Thomas berates Fanny for her refusal of Crawford, he reveals that his scale of values weighs more favourably the effectiveness of Henry's proposal than its merits.

"Here is a young man wishing to pay his addresses to you, with everything to

---

[11] How far Austen would be prepared to take this critique of mere rank is unclear. She certainly does not give the impression, either in her fiction or in her letters, of being a leveller. Mr Wickham, though, is a steward's son, and he is allowed to have the appearance of virtue; that he does not have its character is made due to him, not to his social status. But whether Austen thought a peasant potentially equal in intelligence and virtue to a Mr Knightley is not a consideration she ever seems to have made public.

> recommend him; not merely situation in life, fortune, and character, but with more than common agreeableness, with address and conversation pleasing to everyone". (*MP*, 285)

Pleasing to everyone, that is, but to the person Henry wishes to marry. The scale of values by which Sir Thomas operates is evident here. He cannot imagine that situation in life and plausible manners may not be necessary conditions for suitability as a marriage partner. He can, it is true, think such thoughts where his own daughters are concerned, but he seems unaware that the principles extend to others and even to himself. Having himself chosen a lifeless doll, Sir Thomas will not until the end realize Fanny's wish for him that he feel "how wretched, and how unpardonable it was, how hopeless and how wicked it was, to marry without affection" (*MP*, 293). She cannot, however, convey these feelings to Sir Thomas because it appears to her that he will not be swayed by principle.

> "Have you any reason, child, to think ill of Mr Crawford's temper"?
>
> "No, Sir".
>
> She longed to add, "but of his principles I have"; but her heart sunk under the appalling prospect of discussion, explanation, and probably non-conviction. (*MP*, 287)

The probability of nonconviction comes partjally from Fanny's unwillingness to compromise her cousins; but the force of this passage is to tell us that the statement of principled belief is unlikely to sway the mind of a man convinced that marriage is more a matter of form than of love. Sir Thomas is not beyond conviction, but he cannot be so addressed while he, as the male authority, holds values contrary to principle.

This question of the rhetorical efficacy of quietude and principle leads Mudrick to complain that Mansfield Park is contrived; he believes it implausible and inartistic for gentle thoughtfulness to triumph at the expense of superficial liveliness. Behind this view lies a prejudice in favour of superficial liveliness that Austen herself was conscious of (Mansfield Park, if anything, was certainly her most *conscious* and deliberate work), as shown when she has Edmund say about Mary in one of his rarer moments of delusion:

> "The right of a lively mind...seizing whatever may contribute to its own amusement or that of others; perfectly allowable, [sic] when untinctured by ill humour or roughness; and there is not a shadow of either in the countenance or manner of Mary Crawford, nothing sharp, or loud, or coarse." (*MP*, 57-58)

This attitude allows the inner corruption of the Crawfords to be overlooked, whether because of love as in Edmund's case or because of moral indifference as in Mudrick's. The "right" of the Crawfords to seize whatever they can for their own amusement is a licence to use people, to treat people as means rather than as ends, and it is typically the "consumer" mentality that upholds this right. This is the way the Crawfords get things done: they act at the expense of others and they are essentially consumers of other people. [94] The Crawfords are able to exploit their power as desired company for their own amusement, as Henry does when he proposes to amuse himself with Fanny. The example of the Crawfords prophetically illustrates the standards of our own consumerist culture, which the moral culture envisaged by Austen disdains.[95]

One symptom of the repudiation of a moralistic culture that Austen illustrates in her novels is the inability or unwillingness of characters to consider their own moral worth. Characters such as Henry Crawford and Willoughby have sacrificed self-respect to achieve material success. These two characters possess an intelligence capable of achieving moral worth, but their potential moral intelligence is never in harmony with their social ambition. There is a dim reflection in them of this potential and at moments the potential is agitated; the agitation is temporary, however, and is easily quelled. Henry discovers his potential when he falls for Fanny, but seeks solace for her refusal of him in seducing Maria. As for Willoughby, he has other resources for consolation:

> That his repentance of misconduct, which thus bought its own punishment, was

---

[94] In After Virtue, Alisdair MacIntyre adds that those who treat others as means to their own ends rather than as independent moral agents (he cites Gilbert Osmond in Portrait of a Lady as an example), tend to have the most means, the most external power, at their disposal. His observation entails the necessity of tempering external power or status with principle (24-25).

[95] See Alisdair MacIntyre's critique of consumerism in After Virtue, 23-35.

> sincere, need not be doubted;--nor that he long thought of Colonel Brandon with envy, and of Marianne with regret. But that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted a habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended upon--for he did neither. He lived to exert, and frequently to enjoy himself. His wife was not always out of humour, nor his home always uncomfortable; and in his breeding of horses and dogs, and in sporting of every kind, he found no inconsiderable degree of domestic felicity. (*SS*, 334).

So much for the romantic! And if we look closely at the language describing Willoughby's remorse we find only "envy" and "regret" in contrast to the list of sufferings the true romantic might endure (Austen may well have had The Sufferings of Young Werther in mind as a contrast). In other words, Willoughby's suffering is minimal and even then it is tinged with sentiments that are not wholly moral. By contrast, Brandon, whom everyone sees as unromantic, is alleviated from melancholy only by his marriage to Marianne. Willoughby's sense of self is very much bound up with his creature comforts, and unlike the moral man (Brandon), who can achieve happiness, Willoughby can at best achieve *felicity*. [96]

Our characterization of Henry Crawford and Willoughby shows that they do not fully understand themselves: as Tave says,[97] Henry is unaware of the irony of his life, and Willoughby is equally unaware of the irony of his, that he, too, denies himself the possibility of a greater happiness with Marianne without fully understanding that he has trapped himself in his quest for superficial pleasures. Everyone deserves a qualitatively better life, a moral life, and the idea of self-esteem in the virtuous life is that a person understands what he deserves. If he underestimates those deserts, he is petty; if he overestimates them, he is vain. This is Aristotle's definition of the virtue, and when we apply it to Henry and Willoughby we see that while both are vain men, they can equally be accused of pettiness in underestimating their deserts as moral beings. For Austen, some depth of soul is required in self-esteem, and this also seems to be Aristotle's sense of things, for he characterizes the virtue as

---

[96] *Felicity* is used by Austen to denote a minor sort of contentment in contrast to the happiness of the moral life. It is used by Charlotte Lucas, for example, to describe the kind of life she can expect with Mr Collins.

[97] Some Words of Jane Austen, 165.

high-mindedness or greatness of soul. Aristotle, though, equates self-esteem with seeking honour, "the greatest of external goods" (*NE*, 94). Yet honour for Aristotle is really a "crown" for a virtuous person; it is his inner self, his basic goodness that warrants honour.—

> If he were utterly base, [a man] would not even deserve honour, for honour is the prize of excellence and virtue, and it is reserved as a tribute to the good. Highmindedness is thus the crown, as it were, of the virtues: it magnifies them and cannot exist without them. Therefore, it is hard to be truly high-minded and, in fact, impossible without goodness and nobility. (*NE*, 95)

The final word of the quotation, "nobility", is a translation of the Greek word *kalokagathia*, which combines *kalos* and *agathos*, meaning external and internal excellence respectively."[1] Aristotle's meaning is close, though not identical, to Austen's conception of gentleman--and, indeed, lady. Manners are a direct reflection of a person's character, and they are not merely ornamental but an intrinsic expression of the person's worth. Here we can see more clearly why Willoughby and Henry are both vain and petty. They are able to emulate the outer but not the inner form of a gentleman and so pretend to be better than they really are. On the other hand, they lack inner self-worth because they cannot actually achieve the noble life.

As the difference between pride and vanity is explicitly discussed in Pride and Prejudice, that novel's characters can be the models. Mary Bennet actually makes the distinction when contributing to a discussion of Mr Darcy's pride.

> "Pride...is a very common failing I believe...human nature is particularly prone to it, and there are very few of us who do not cherish a feeling of self-complacency on the score of some quality or other, real or imaginary. Vanity and pride are different things, though the words are often used synonimously. A person may be proud without being vain. Pride relates more to our opinion of ouselves, vanity to what we would have others think of us. (*PP*, 16)

The last remark echoes what Aristotle says about the high-minded man, that he "must be open in hate and open in love, for to hide one's feelings and to care more for the opinions of

[1] Martin Ostwald, "Glossary of Technical Terms" in his translation of Nicomachean Ethics, 309.

others than for truth is a sign of timidity. He [the high-minded man] speaks and acts openly: since he looks down upon others his speech is free and thoughtful" (*NE*, 97-98). The openness that accompanies pride is a sign that there is nothing to hide, while the implicit deceit in vanity makes it clear that the vain person cares little for himself, only for what others think of him. This openness characterizes Mr Darcy, although to some extent it is a fault in him. When Charlotte says of Darcy that he has a right to be proud because of his obvious superiority and fortune, we should remember that it is not for these alone that pride is warranted. Aristotle says that the high-minded man, while blessed by fortune, must be virtuous to prevent him becoming haughty and arrogant: "for without virtue it is not easy to bear the gifts of fortune gracefully" (*NE*, 96). Darcy is shown to be not always graceful in this respect, especially towards his inferiors in birth and understanding."[1] The right to be proud is not an unqualified right, as Mr Darcy himself admits to Elizabeth at the end of the novel. When Mr Darcy learns this, he, too, has come more fully to "know himself". Nevertheless, Mr Darcy happens to be invariably right in his assessment of others, and this, in Aristotle's estimation, gives the high-minded man a justification for looking down on others (*NE*, 96). "Looking down", though, should seem more like righteous indignation than simple disdain, and his contempt for Wickham is more justified than his scorn for Mrs Bennet or Mr Collins. Darcy's sense of discernment, his strong mind and his unwillingness to compromise, are qualities which are essential to counter a potentially treacherous misuse of pleasing manners.

The distinction between justified and unjustified pride is captured in the following description of the Bingley sisters, who are here shown to be proud on the grounds of possessing external goods alone.

> They were rather handsome, had been educated in one of the first private seminaries in town, had a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, were in the habit of spending more than they ought, and of associating with people of rank; and were therefore in

[1]Aristotle says in the Nicomachean Ethics that "there is nothing ignoble about asserting one's dignity among the great, but to do so among the lower classes is just as crude as to assert one's strength against an invalid" (97).

every respect entitled to think well of themselves and, meanly of others. (*PP*, 12)

In this passage, Austen exposes the false logic of vanity, with its exaggerated "conclusion" ("in every respect...") following its list of attainments that are simply the gift of rank and fortune. The contrast is between the honour that the high-minded seek, which is a spiritual need, and the type of "honours" sought by the vain: honour is not just a matter of privilege automatically granted the well-to-do. If we tend to see Austen as a spokesman for a privileged class without distinguishing her emphasis on spiritual values, we will miss the essential role her notion of the virtues plays.

Her emphasis on spiritual values here gives us one reason to call her a leveller. In her novels, we see enough virtues in the lower ranks of society and enough vices in the higher to make this clear. Yet the notion of *within society* must be maintained to capture Austen's intentions as they are evident in the novels. The connection between virtue and manners is not incidental, and while there is no evidence that she believed the working classes to be inherently corrupt, it is difficult to see how they could emulate the sense of social propriety that she demands of her virtuous characters. When she does introduce virtuous characters outside the gentleman class, they are usually middle class and close enough socially to be able to know how to behave properly. We see this, for instance, in Robert Martin's gentlemanlike letter to Harriet and in Mr Gardiner's gentlemanlike appearance. However, we need not say that because this applied for *her*, it need apply as strictly for *us*. We do not generally share her stricter sense of manners, although we do still maintain notions of propriety or acceptability of behaviour. So if our intention is to use Austen as a critique of mere privilege, we must be more flexible in what counts as acceptable manners. Like her, we feel that virtue is often accompanied by a noble appearance, but we must also insist that this nobility can be seen in the "savage" as well as in the English gentleman.

If we are to follow the parallels between Austen and Aristotle to their logical conclusion, we need a final or ultimate virtue to which the others refer. In so far as the irrational virtues go, and excluding the notion of the contemplative man, for Aristotle the primary virtue is justice; in Austen it is candour. Justice in Aristotle's theory is primarily

concerned with the distribution of goods in the "inner" sense as well as with external goods. But it is not in this that the similarity between justice and candour resides, but in what they mean for each author. For both, the virtues are secular, and the sense in which this is true is that they are related to the happiness of the community rather than to individual salvation. The ultimate virtue will then be a summation of this fact so that we see in it all the other virtues reflected. Thus of justice, Aristotle writes:

> in one sense we call those things "just" which produce and preserve happiness for the social and political community... And for this reason justice is regarded as the highest of all virtues...as the proverb has it "In justice every virtue is summed up"...Now, the worst man is he who practices wickedness toward himself as well as his friends, but the best man is not one who practices virtue towards himself, but who practices it toward others, for that is a hard thing to achieve. Justice in this sense, then, is not a part of virtue but the whole of excellence or virtue. (*NE*, 113-114)

When Aristotle says that the best man is one who practices virtue towards others rather than towards himself, he is not retracting what he earlier says about self-esteem. Because self-esteem does reflect on the self, it is an "easier" virtue than those which are wholly other-regarding. Self-esteem is not like selfishness, and it is very easy to be selfish. But to be wholly concerned with the well-being of others is extremely difficult. Indeed, one cannot be selfless to the point of self-destruction, and a healthy balance needs to be maintained between self-interest and regard for others.[100] Austen's notion of candour strikes exactly this balance, but it is not an uncomplicated notion. What exactly constitutes true candour is problematic: must it include the intellectual virtue of discrimination or must it be primarily emotive?

Evidence from the novels themselves shows that Austen was familiar with Hugh Blair,[101] and his Sermons are the most likely source of her fully developed notion of candour. In his assessment of candour, Blair does not use the word in a technical sense, but expatiates

[100]Aristotle's notion of justice would seem to take this into account, for it is concerned with distribution of goods to everyone. The selfless man is not left out of the accounting.

[101]*MP*, 83; *NA*, 83.

upon its common meaning at the time, which was "absence of malice", "a willingness to think well of others".[102] Blair distinguishes true candour from gullibility on the one hand and suspicion on the other; it must also be natural or unfeigned. True candour, he says, is not that "studied openness of behaviour we often meet with, a smiling smoothness which conceals a vicious heart. True candour is a mean between unsuspicious credulity and suspicion".[103] The truly candid person condemns with regret, for he makes allowances for human faults. Significantly, Blair says that candour requires information and impartiality because passion and prejudice distort judgement. This is very close to the lesson learned by Elizabeth in Pride and Prejudice , for it places prejudice firmly on the side of passions. Blair distinguishes passions from temper or sensibility on the grounds that passions tend to be excessive, and, whereas they "rouse the dormant spirits of the soul", their excessiveness clouds judgement and causes mental turmoil.

But the real problem with the passions is that they are essentially self-regarding. This is only implied in Blair's account but implied strongly by the contrast of passion and sensibility. The essence of sensibility is that it allows the principles of charity and candour to be realized; both virtues form the only climate in which love can grow. Love, says Blair, "is the chief ground of mutual confidence and union among men. It prevents animosities which spring from groundless prejudice."[104] The humane and benevolent man does not regard his fellow human beings as enemies, but as friends, and he regards the concerns of his friends with ardour and sympathy. An envious temper, on the other hand, "wraps itself up in its own interests".[105] Blair's principal point here is that because we tend to judge others on the basis of our sense of self-esteem, a mean person will see meanness in others. "Through this blind perversion, he feels he can vent his righteous indignation and believe he is doing service to God". [106] This is the bad temper of a Mrs Norris: a misjudgement based on lack of self-worth. We can see the trait also in Charlotte Lucas, who believes that nobody can be

---

[102]It is so defined by Johnson in his Dictionary.
[103]"Sermon xxv--On Candour" in Sermons, 384-85.
[104]"Sermon xxv", 387.
[105]"Sermon xvii", 278.
[106] "Sermon xxv", 392.

truly happy because she cannot be. A healthy opinion of the self is therefore essential to correct judgement. Candour gives us the basis for the type of social cooperation Blair sees as necessary for a humane society to operate. The consequences of malice and envy, both "passions" for Blair, are upheaval in the family and ultimately in the state. For him, upheaval in the former would signify upheaval in the latter, particularly as it is in the family that people show their true colours. "It is in small incidents", he says, "that the system of human life is largely composed". And the temper is formed in domestic life: "the forms of life disguise men when abroad [in society]. But within his own family, every man is known to be what he truly is".[107] It is unlikely that the wider implications of seemingly trivial domestic affairs were lost on Austen.

For her, though, the harmonious society was a secular unit, not as in Blair a universal state bonded by religious belief. This is not to say either that Austen was an unbeliever or that her notion of the virtues is entirely uninformed by Christian belief; it is primarily that there is no direct correlation between religious salvation and the happy society in her novels. We see this in the differing notions of ultimate virtue in Blair and Austen: for the one it was a devout mind, for the other it was an open and candid one.[108] Yet both share the conviction that emotion tempered by reason is the means to ultimate virtue. In Blair, the devout mind is achieved by reason, and the virtues of the devout person are animated by sensibility. The actual will to be rational is emotional: "The temper allows the principle of benevolence to become realized, rather than being a loosely formulated abstract idea".[109] Blair and Austen associate the rational in morality with regard for others and the irrational with passionate self-regard. To temper passion by reason is to see clearly and to understand principle.

In Pride and Prejudice, Austen allows us to see passion modified in Elizabeth's mind as she contemplates Darcy's letter. What we see here is reason--in this case clear and

---

[107]"Sermon xvii", 277.

[108]In addition, the community--at least its virtuous and discriminating members--serves in Austen's novels as a corrective. Blair was sceptical that secular forces could in practice have this power. " they would prove very feeble instruments of order and peace, if there were no checks upon the conduct of men from the sense of divine legislation" ("Sermon xxx", 473).

[109]"Sermon xvii", 277.

impartial judgement--struggle against her prejudice for Wickham over Darcy. The passage illustrates Blair's point that correct judgement can be achieved with information and impartiality.

> What Wickham had said of the living was fresh in her memory, and as she recalled his very words, it was impossible not to feel that there was gross duplicity on one side or the other; and, for a few moments, she flattered herself that her wishes did not err. But when she read, and re-read with the closest attention, the particulars immediately following of Wickham's resigning all pretentions to the living, of his receiving in lieu, so comfortable a sum as three thousand pounds, again she was forced to hesitate. She put down the letter, weighed every circumstance with what she meant to be impartiality--deliberated on the probability of each statement--but with little success. On both sides it was only assertion. Again she read on. But every line proved more clearly that the affair, which she had believed it impossible that any contrivance should so represent, as to render Mr Darcy's conduct in it less than infamous, was capable of a turn which must make him entirely blameless throughout the whole. (*PP*, 182)

The process of reasoning goes something like this: her mind is initially opened to the possibility that blame lies in either direction--this is the result of Darcy's information; she then temporarily upholds her prejudice for Wickham; a close reading of the letter, though, forces her to weigh the circumstances; then she contemplates and deliberates; finally she concludes that Darcy is blameless even though she had previously believed that nothing could vindicate him. To see clearly here is to overcome one's wishes, which are self-regarding or flattering to the self ("she flattered herself that her wishes did not err "). She had previously opted for Wickham over Darcy, convinced that her judgement was sound. Forced now to weigh the circumstances, she sees the two in a different light. This awakening leads her to reconsider Wickham's courting of Miss King, which she now views as "hatefully mercenary" (184); before she had defended it as "prudent" (137), even though she had prior to that condemned Charlotte's agreement to marry Collins as "selfish" rather than prudent (121).

Her vanity, her favour towards Wickham, renders her unable to make a clear moral distinction between the prudent and the mercenary motive. Charlotte marries for security, Wickham for fortune, but Elizabeth upholds principle only where Charlotte is concerned. In her moment of awakening, Elizabeth diagnoses her problem.

> "Had I been in love I could not be more wretchedly blind. But vanity, not love, has been my folly.--Pleased with the preference of one, and offended by the neglect of the other, on the very beginning of our acquaintance, I have courted prepossession and ignorance, and driven reason away, where either were concerned. Till this moment, I never knew myself". (*PP*, 185)

The vanity she speaks of is an association that is flattering to her. Darcy has been too frank, even in his proposal to her, and her passion for Wickham stems from a need to assert the worth of one who has flattered her over one who has pointed out the shortcomings of her situation. Her vanity made her have a good opinion only of her supposed admirer.

Elizabeth's prejudice against Darcy shows a lack of candour, an unwarranted suspiciousness, while her partiality towards Wickham shows gullibility. In showing this partiality, she displays the same tendency towards gullibility as her sister Jane. After Wickham informs her of Darcy's "malice" towards him, Elizabeth says to herself that Wickham's "very countenance" vouches for his amiability (71-72). A few pages later, Austen comments of Jane:" it was not in her nature to question a young man of such amiable appearance as Wickham" (76). The symptoms are the same, but the motives are different. Jane's candour is defined early on in the novel by Elizabeth herself.

> "Oh! you are a great deal too apt you know, to like people in general. You never see fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in your life...with *your* good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candour is common enough; --one meets it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design--to take the good of every body's character and make it still better, and say

nothing of the bad--belongs to you alone. (*PP*, 11-12)[110]

Jane's unselfish candour, motivated by goodness of heart, tends, as Elizabeth says, to be too uncritical. Jane takes the appearance of virtue for the real thing because she relies too much on manners as a means of judging. In this respect, Elizabeth's judgement is superior to Jane's. She can see that the haughtily cold manners of the Bingley sisters indicate their vanity and pettiness, whereas Jane is impressed by their attentions to her and by their fine manners and clothes. On the other hand, Jane consistently (and against general opinion) refuses to find fault in Darcy and is subsequently proved right by the events of the novel. Even though Jane is right more by default than volition, she has the right emotional equipment to be candid; Elizabeth has the right intellectual equipment. In Aristotle's terms, Jane deviates from the mean in the direction of gullibility; Elizabeth deviates in the direction of suspicion.

The heart of the matter, though, is the extent to which deviations from candour affect the happiness and well-being of the community, the family, and even that of the self. The presence of characters like Wickham creates a demand for critical perception, although that perception must be accompanied by a candid dispositon. In an idyllic world such perception would be unnecessary, and Jane's uncritical candour would be the ultimate virtue. In the "real" world of Pride and Prejudice, and in all the novels, the presence of Wickham, of Willoughby, or of Frank Churchill makes candour like Jane's look like complacency. The charge of complacency is levelled against Jane both by Elizabeth and Darcy, and her lack of animation in public causes Darcy to believe her not to be in love with Bingley. Reflecting on this charge, Elizabeth feels that "Jane's feelings, though fervent, were little displayed, and that there was a constant complacency in her air and manner, not often united with great sensibility" (*PP*, 185). Yet by the end of the novel, when Jane's initial candour towards Darcy is vindicated, the leading characters form their own idyllic community at Pemberley, away from the need to be "critically candid" with quite the constancy required elsewhere. This move towards idyll almost banishes stupid and hostile people, for there peace and love can be

[110]Elizabeth's declaration about affectation of candour parallels Blair's comments cited earlier.

achieved. Schiller, in his essay "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry", points to the idea of the idyllic as as one of the ultimate goals of civilization. The idyll portrays, he says, "man in a state of innocence, which means a state of harmony and peace with himself and the external world". He adds that the thought of regaining innocence "is the only thing that can reconcile man with the evils to which he is exposed in the path of civilization".[111] Austen's is not a vision of life separate entirely from the evils of civilization; even at Pemberley certain unwelcome guests must be tolerated. But in their different ways, her three central novels, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, and Mansfield Park, each contain the utopian element despite its being a denial of the real life of the novels. It is a denial despite life's stupidities and petty evils being the cause of the virtuous characters coming together and notwithstanding Austen's reliance on folly when she makes the discriminations that are the moral centre of her novels.

Austen maintains this utopian vision because she would wish in principle to exclude from her ideal those members of her society who were incapable of meeting or unwilling to meet the precepts of virtue. Her utopianism is problematic because the virtuous are defined in their relationship with those who lack or exceed the mean; so the desire to exclude them is incompatible with the need to use them as a means of comparison. Indeed, Aristotle's ethical theory depends on this point of comparison: the mean is defined in its relationship with lack and excess. However, Aristotle wrote about the real world, where vice cannot be excluded; Austen's world is fictional and can entertain exclusions of this kind. By the end of her novels, the struggle against folly and vice is over: the fools have outlived their comic potential and the vicious have outlived their usefulness as points of comparison. The coming together of the virtuous in marriage and in their separate estates must be seen as a symbolic act of union and a separation from corruption.

These symbolic overtones are especially noticeable in Mansfield Park, where the union of Fanny and Edmund, the exclusion of the Crawfords, and especially the exile of Mrs Norris and Maria, constitute an allotment of rewards and punishments. And in Emma, the petty criticisms of Mrs Elton become irrelevant to the happiness of Emma and Mr Knightley.

---

[111]Friedrich Schiller, "On Simple and Sentimental Poetry" quoted in Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967) 58-59.

> The wedding was very much like other weddings, where the parties have no taste for finery or parade; and Mrs Elton, from the particulars detailed by her husband, thought it all extremely shabby, and inferior to her own.--"Very little white satin, very few lace veils; a most pitiful business! Selina would stare when she heard of it".--But in spite of these deficiencies, the wishes, the hopes, the confidence, the predictions of the small band of true friends who witnessed the ceremony, were fully answered in the perfect happiness of the union. (*E*, 440).

Mrs Elton's exclusion from the wedding and her exclusion from "the small band of true friends" indicates that her "inveterate opinion" is of no consequence to the true community of friends and lovers, and that she is in moral isolation. The community of friends becomes, in effect, a mini *polis* similar to the Aristotelian model where relationships are formed on the basis of friendship. On this model, different types of human relations have friendship in common even though the bonds may be different, as the relationship between man and wife will be different but analagous to the relationship between two fellow citizens of good will. In Austen, friendship transcends the actual social bond because the bond alone does not guarantee friendship, whether it is formed by marriage or blood ties. There is no friendship between Mr and Mrs Bennet, neither is there friendship between Mrs Bennet and Elizabeth.

Friendship, not just friendliness, is for Aristotle a separate virtue, a characteristic of some and not others; and we see, too, in Austen how some characters are capable of friendship and some not, and how some are capable, but do not seek it. Aristotle distinguishes true friendship as an internal good, from two other kinds: friendship based on mutual advantage and on pleasure, both of which seek external goods. True friendship is sought for its own sake and it involves recognition of the other's intrinsic worth, and recognition depends on that person actually practising virtue. Mrs Bennet, for example, cannot have true friends, not even (perhaps least of all) in her husband and children. Her favourite daughter, Lydia, is not her friend because Lydia is entirely indifferent to her mother, as she displays on departing from her after marrying Wickham (*PP*, 292). Neither Lydia nor Mrs Bennet can understand true friendship because they never seek internal goods. These are cases of inability, while in

others it is a case of unrealized potential. Mr Bennet could potentially be a true friend, but in his disillusionment has sought compensation in books and his estate. He is affectionate towards Elizabeth, but friendship between them is never realized because of Elizabeth's awareness of his lack of responsibility towards his family. Only the virtuous have both the capacity and the desire to seek friendship, and it is the actual practice that gives them the necessary characteristic.

Because the virtue of friendship covers such diverse relationships as being members of the same political community on the one hand, and being husband and wife on the other, Aristotle distinguishes friendship and affection. Friendship depends on physical proximity and ideally involves living together; furthermore, friendliness towards others depends on their good will towards us (*NE*, 220). Like the other virtues, friendship is an activity and can be continually activated only if people live together; however, this togetherness must be mutual--it must be reciprocated so that a feeling of community exists. We can think of living together both from the point of view of the household and the polis. As Aristotle says, the idea of sharing counts most: "friendship is present to the extent that men share something in common...for friendship consists in community" (*NE*, 231). Community, not just being in close physical proximity, constitutes friendship. It is possible that one may have more in common with an acquaintance than with a relation, as Elizabeth Bennet has more in common with Mr Bingley, say, than she does with her own mother. Having something in common means desiring the good for all of life not just the immediate good.

The notion of friendship that Austen and Aristotle use is unfamiliar because it is not primarily informed by emotion and affection. This is not to say that there is no affection involved in Aristotle's notion of friendship, but that it must be distinguished from friendship. Affection and friendship differ in the possibility that we can feel affection but not have it reciprocated, as when we feel affection for an inanimate object. The desire for a friend's good, though, is a choice, not an emotion because we can feel emotions regardless of how the other feels or in spite of ourselves. But we can feel friendship only if the same feeling is reciprocated. Similarly, friendship is not the same as good will although it involves good will

because the good will of one may not be returned by another. To repeat our example: Elizabeth cannot be the true friend of Mrs Bennet because the latter cannot have an idea of friendship based on the common good.

By the end of Pride and Prejudice, each of the characters retreats from Meryton and Netherfield to set up a family *polis* in the area of Pemberley. It is a place where friendship can flourish because it is founded on equality and good will, and it is a place where any lingering sense of inequality is ironed out. Kitty visits frequently and is improved, the Gardiners are free to visit without being regarded with disdain--moreover, Darcy overcomes his prejudice and genuinely loves them. Elizabeth is able to maintain a sportive playfulness with Darcy, and her example encourages Georgiana to feel less inhibited among men, an inhibition that resulted from her sense of her brother's superiority. "By Elizabeth's instructions she began to comprehend that a woman may take liberties with her husband, which a brother will not always allow in a sister more than ten years younger than himself" (*PP*, 345). This is a society of equals and friends and has achieved what Aristotle calls concord or *harmonia*: "being of the same mind", "thinking in harmony". Concord renders the enforcement of justice unnecessary: "When people are friends, they have no need of justice, but when they are just, they need friendship in addition" (*NE*, 215).[112] The utopia to which each of Austen's novels aspires must exclude or limit the influence of those incapable of concord, for their presence makes policing necessary. In this idyllic state, everyone becomes a good citizen as well a virtuous person--civic, social and private life is in harmony. In an unjust system, a good citizen may not be virtuous because in being a good citizen he may be promoting evil; similarly, as we have seen in Austen's novels, someone with pleasing manners may not be a good person because he is promoting his own interest. The just community provides the context whereby the seeming practice of virtue and the actual practice coincide. The intuition of both Austen and Aristotle is that the virtuous life ultimately depends on the

[112]It would be tantalizing to compare Austen's and Aristotle's vision of a community of friends with the tenets of classical anarchism. Any view that social harmony can exist without coercion, either through law or power, requires members of a community to have a well-developed capacity for virtue and be able to police themselves.

banishment of lies, folly, self-interest, and moral corruption.

The relationship between Aristotle's theory and Austen's fiction is in parts so close that it justifies Gilbert Ryle's assertion that Austen was an Aristotelian. Ryle, without the evidence I have tried to adduce, allows her this ascription on the weaker claim that she is not a Calvinist. That is, she is Aristotelian in presenting a pattern of ethical ideas which represents people as differing in degrees. Her characters are not black or white, damned or saved; they are shades of difference, and Austen brings her "wine taster's technique of moral discrimination" to their activities to show these differences.[113] It is possible now to make the stronger claim that she is an Aristotelian in the more direct sense that she uses his ethical theory as her method of moral discrimination. Unfortunately there is no evidence that her source was the Nicomachean Ethics itself, but there was clearly, as Ryle says, some "Aristotelian oxygen" in the intellectual atmosphere of her time.

We are now in a position to consider whether Aristotle's influence on Austen goes further than his ethical thought. In a short article on Austen[114], George Whalley offers a parallel between Aristotle's poetic theory and the structure of Austen's novels. Whalley argues that Aristotle's view of tragedy, here applied to prose fiction, is that while there should be a complex interaction between plot and character, the final goal of the work is pure action. According to Whalley this is the aesthetic as well as the moral end of drama:

> the overt plot and the characters - what is done by whom, to whom, and why--is not the end (or purpose) of the piece but an aspect of what defines the intricate and finely traced arc of pure action, allows the configuration of action to be traced out in physically discernible and humanly intelligible terms. (113)

The notion of "pure action" defines the relationship between a work's ethical content and its aesthetic form. The plot is not a contrivance to emphasize various devices at the author's disposal (as the formalists would have it); it combines with character by way of imitating what is recognizably human action--recognizable in its ethical dimension and in its physical

---

[113]Gilbert Ryle, "Jane Austen and the Moralists", 170.
[114]"Jane Austen: Poet" in Jane Austen's Achievement, ed. Juliet McMaster (London: MacMillan, 1976) 106-133.

representation of human life. The relationship between plot and character is that a character has a disposition to act, and what he does causes the plot to unfold; reciprocally, as the plot unfolds, events force the character's hand. Thus, Oedipus' nature is to seek the truth, and he finds it through the series of unfolding events which he partly causes and which partly act on him. The combination of plot and character leads finally to the dramatic climax where the character's quest is realized. He "becomes", and there is nothing further for him to do or become in that particular work. So far we have considered Jane Austen's novels from a specifically moral viewpoint: in Aristotle's terms, we have concentrated on the *ethos* of her characters. It now remains to explore the aesthetic dimension of her works and their relationship with the Aristotelian aesthetic tradition.

## V. Jane Austen and the Classical Tradition

"We are perpetually moralists" (Samuel Johnson)

The first section of this chapter considers the reasons for Austen's alleged moral narrowness and traces to Samuel Johnson the belief that extremes of good and evil are not legitimate subject matters for fiction. Johnson combines ethical and aesthetic considerations in arguing which ethical matters are fit subjects for the novel, where "fit" is considered an aesthetic criterion of dramatic representation of human virtues and vices. Aristotle similarly believes that to evoke sympathetic response, a character must be drawn so that *human* qualities, as opposed to divine or demonic ones, are recognized. In light of Aristotle's appearing to justify realistic portrayal of character, the second section considers whether his aesthetic thought is appropriate to the novel. If character, as Henry James tells us,[113] is the soul of the novel, how can Aristotle's subordination of character to plot be reconciled with novelistic practice? can any modification of this requirement remain within the spirit of Aristotle's aesthetics? The final section discusses whether Pride and Prejudice is an appropriate model of neoclassical realism.

### A. Social or Transcendent?

We observed in the last chapter that Blair believed a virtuous sensibility to be the way of achieving a spiritual rapport with the divine; by contrast, we saw that (whatever her private feelings might have been) in her novels, Austen sees the practice of virtue as essentially a secular activity independent of religious feeling. Religious feeling is accompanied

---

[113] Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" in The Future of the Novel ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956) 15-16. "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"

by a belief that the virtuous life leads to personal salvation, even though, as Blair sees it, personal salvation is linked to the welfare of the community and is not merely personal. The primary thrust of Austen's moral vision is towards social rather than transcendent concerns. Her characters are neither wholly evil nor wholly good: their moral characteristics are determined by comparison with relevant traits in other characters. Gilbert Ryle puts the point this way: "Jane Austen's people are, nearly always, alive all over, all through and all round, displaying admirably or amusingly or deplorably proportioned mixtures of all colours that there are, save pure White and pure Black".[116] Austen hardly ever, if at all, employs the terms "good" and "evil" in their ultimate senses, preferring to rely on individual virtues for her sense of right and wrong.

Austen's unconcern with the transcendental is taken by Angus Wilson as a mark against her; he feels that she is primarily responsible for a narrowness that has crept into subsequent fiction. Her concern with right and wrong rather than good and evil is the symptom of this narrowness. Wilson says:

> The novel today... is becoming provincial and...the novel of manners, strong though it is, is somehow becoming an increasingly restrictive influence in England. I have been led to suppose that one of the troubles is that we are too much concerned with right and wrong, and not enough with evil.[117]

According to Wilson, Austen sets up a "middle class view of right and wrong as being sufficient to explain human conduct" (1080). But he fails to discern in Austen's work the possibility of deriving general human concerns from fictional events which admittedly occur in specific time and space. Wilson demands that the novel make its chracters representative of transcendent morality as he believes Richardson's novels do. Richardson, he says, portrays the struggle of good against evil and is thereby not restricted by the morality of a particular social group. Wilson argues that the novel should move back in the direction of portraying transcendent evil because he believes this move will be accompanied by a greater concern for

---

[116]"Jane Austen and the Moralists", 178.
[117]Angus Wilson, "Evil in the English Novel", The Listener (December 27, 1962) 1079.

sex, which he also finds absent from Austen's novels.[118] Primarily, though, he wishes to see fictional characters represent good and evil as Clarissa and Lovelace do. The latter, he says, "comes very close to being the Devil" (1079). Presumably, Clarissa is Eve in this case, but an Eve who can actually resist temptation. The implication of Wilson's argument is that the novel should move away from realism towards allegory.

Wilson's inability to consider the wider implications of seemingly trivial events in Austen's novels is evident in his treatment of an episode in Mansfield Park, the one where Mary Crawford finds she cannot get a cart to deliver her harp because it is harvest time. The author's implied rebuke of Mary shows, according to Wilson, not only Austen's provincialism, but also a lack of heart.

> Because of a certain smugness, a kind of social superiority, this narrowness also sometimes means a failure of heart; it means that Edmund Bertram in Mansfield Park can truly, so to speak, score off Mary Crawford, because she does not know that the farmers will need their cart for harvesting: she is somehow regarded from that moment as being morally defective because she does not know the ways of the country.[119]

It is unclear from reading the passage in question (*MP*, 62) how Edmund can be said to "score off" Mary when he simply explains that carts cannot be spared at harvest time. In any case, we are supposed to see in Mary's ignorance a broader implication. This is the same technique that Austen uses elsewhere: to take a trivial indiscretion as a symptom of something larger, as she does with Wickham's denunciation of Darcy or with Willoughby's tendency to speak his mind too often. In the present case, Mary's assumption that people's services can be bought at a price regardless of priorities indicates her inability to switch from city values to country ones. It shows how the city is separated from its economic roots in the country, from quite literally its source of food. Country activity is motivated by economic neccessity; city activity, at least that type of activity represented by the Crawfords, is sheer play. It is

---

[118]Sexual interest is there, as when the party of couples in Mansfield Park break through the fence into the woods while touring Rushworth's estate. Wilson probably requires its presence to be more explicit.

[119]"Evil in the English Novel", 1080.

essential to Austen's meaning that we are sensitive to the deeper significance of what often seem to be trivial events, otherwise we will see in her work only a surface realism. Here we have a significant attack on the leisure class seeing the working class as simply functional, at their disposal.

Wilson associates Austen's "provincialism" with her countrified and middle-class morality, and this is the usual sense of the term. However, apart from failing to bring out the significance of the events that supposedly illustrate this morality in Austen, Wilson fails to consider the wider implications evident in the contrast between the novel of transcendence and the novel of manners. He confuses the notion of manners in Austen's work with middle-class etiquette, as if manners, rather than being a public expression of self, were for her the mores of the provinces. As we have seen, manners are an expression of an internal state--character--which has been formed from the choice of the moral life. When Wilson indicates that the novel has become too interested in morality and not enough in good and evil, we might wonder: is morality not concerned with good and evil?

A first step in articulating the distinction between morality on the one hand and good and evil on the other comes from T.S.Eliot, whose essay "What is a Classic?" raises the issue of narrowness in literature and sees in provincialism a rejection of religious intensity. [120] In this essay, Eliot speaks of the classic as the product of a mature age, a mature language, and a mature mind (that is, the author's); moreover, a classical period is marked by a maturity of manners and is "more polished and less provincial" than nonclassical eras (12). Eliot uses "provincial" in the restricted sense of being unpolished or having rough edges; most importantly, though, he means that those writers who are provincial are individual talents unaffected by cultural standards (this is an essential addition because he wants to call Shakespeare and Milton "provincial"). For Eliot, a nonclassical era is signified by individual genius, idiosyncratic style, and an intensity of religious belief: Shakespeare and Milton are provincial because they belong to eras of relative immaturity of language and culture, and, while both can be said to have developed the language, it was not developed by them in a way

[120] What is a Classic? (London: Faber and Faber, 1945).

that contributed to a common stock of linguistic facility. A classical era, on the other hand, tends towards the development of a "common style", not simply a convention of writing, but a "community of taste" (13). This "community of taste" exhibits what Eliot calls a catholicity or amplitude: an all-embracing cultural ideal.

> The classic must, within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak the language. It will represent this at its best, and it will also have the widest appeal; among the people to which it belongs, it will find its response among all classes and conditions of men.[121]

Typically, of a classical work we will not say "this is a man of genius using the language", but "this realizes the genius of the language". One might assume that Eliot would find his criteria fulfilled in the neoclassical period of English Literature in the eighteenth century; however, he finds in the neoclassicists only the formal limitations of the classic without its catholicity.

In particular, Eliot cites Johnson as one whose piety was evident, but whose writings lacked any evidence of religious intensity. In essence, he criticizes Johnson as Wilson does Austen for being a committed Christian who reduces questions of good and evil to questions of right and wrong. Of Johnson, Eliot says:

> there are evidences of a deeper religious sensibility in the poetry of Shakespeare (than in the work of Johnson)...and...restriction of religious sensibility itself produces a kind of provinciality...the provinciality which indicates the disintegration of Christendom, the decay of a common belief and a common culture.[122]

Johnson's piety in this matter arises partly from his belief that it is indecent to display religious fervour; for him, religion is essentially a private matter, inwardly felt and intense, but not a subject to parade. More important, though, is his belief that fiction has other goals to meet. Religious experience is not a fit subject for fiction because "the ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for

---

[121] What is a Classic?, 27
[122] What is a Classic?, 18

ornament".[123] Johnson's position was that fiction should represent *human* nature. Thus he complains that Paradise Lost "comprises neither human actions nor human manners".[124] Milton's poem cannot evoke human sympathy because there is nowhere in it for the reader to place himself; its truths are too well known to be surprising or moving, so its affective force is severly limited, and the pleasure a reader may expect from it is minimal.

Whether this is fair to Milton is another question, but it illustrates an important consideration in the debate over the virtues of the novel of transcendence and the novel of manners. The latter is primarily humanist, teaching human virtues in a familiar setting, and aided, not by wonder, but by curiosity about the familiar. Such fiction evokes a natural delight at imitation of the life we know. Having the power to excite, fiction, Johnson believes, is better placed than didactic instruction to teach the virtues. He warns, though, that it must not overexcite its readers:

> these familiar histories may perhaps be made of greater value than the solemnities of professed morality, and convey the knowledge of vice and virtue with more efficacy than axioms and definitions. But if the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited.[125]

The idea that the familiar excites passion does not contradict what he says about the opposite effect of familiar religious truths. The young and ignorant, to whom fiction is primarily directed, have a ready capability of being moved by fancy (hence the need to control the effects of fiction); but, as Johnson says in "Milton", the images from the scriptures actually obstruct fancy because "the good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration" (463). In these passages, Johnson's concern is that the human mind be in control of itself, even though the imagination should be strongly affected by literature. Partly, this

---

[123] "Life of Waller", cited in William Edinger, Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style, 178
[124] "Life of Milton" in Rasselas Poems and Selected Prose, ed. Bernard H. Bronson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1952) 462.
[125] "Rambler 4" in Rasselas Poems and Selected Prose, 62.

intensity is achieved by recalling to the reader his own understanding of reality so that he receives pleasure from the imitation, and partly the effect is achieved by the force with which the images strike the reader. Poetical images must be both pleasurable and intense, but they must also allow the reader to exercise his will: "poetical pleasure must be such as the human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terror such as human strength and fortitude may combat".[126] The terror of evil is so strong that the human mind finds it hard to endure, and coupled with the affective force of fictional examples, the presence of evil in fiction would be overwhelming. Fiction, therefore, should concentrate on the moral nature of human life as a guide to understanding the virtues. Johnson fits the classicist model created by Eliot in his concern with questions of civilized human action and manners. Indeed, he asserts that knowledge of right and wrong is a religious as well as a moral duty.

> Whether we provide for action or conversation,... the first requisite is the religious knowledge of right and wrong ... we are perpetually moralists ... Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary.[127]

This statement is in line with Johnson's belief that *human* truths are essential to us: that religious understanding, while valuable spiritually, must bear on morality. He places stronger emphasis on the moral aspect of civilization than Eliot does, and, where Eliot is concerned with maturity of manners, Johnson is more concerned that the underlying moral character is displayed by manners.[128] Eliot's emphasis is on spiritual catholicity in classical literature and as a result he downplays moral considerations. He seems to assume, like Wilson, that morality

---

[126]"Milton", 463.

[127]"Life of Milton" cited in Walter Jackson Bate, From Classic to Romantic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946) 4.

[128]F.R.Leavis criticizes Eliot for being overly concerned with manners and for debasing the word "maturity":

> What is significant here is the completeness of Eliot's surrender to the consecrated and current nonsense about supreme wit, consummate prose, and perfection of lightness in The Way of the World..."Maturity of manners": what can it mean when manners are isolated in this way--what can maturity of manners be if not something to be discussed in terms of relation between manners and more radical things (moral values, shall we say?) lying behind them?

"T.S.Eliot as Critic" in "Anna Karenina" and other Essays (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967) 186

is tied to the attitudes of particular classes and can never achieve the transcendence of religious belief. But the connection between maturity of manners and the expression of religious intensity is arbitrary or at best incidental because such intensity is, as Eliot says, evident in the great writers of nonclassical eras. However, the true classical period has the catholicity of belief he speaks of, and it also happens to be a period in which language and manners have matured. On the other hand, the connection between morals and manners that the neoclassicist (and thereby "provincial" for Eliot) Johnson makes is essential. The form of human action is an adequate expression of the self.

For Johnson, this connection must be maintained in the depiction of fictional characters if mere realism is to be avoided--a realism, that is, which is simply a mirror of life. The fiction writer must emphasise the triumph of virtue over vice by a necessary discrimination between the best and worst aspects of human life. On the other hand, says Johnson: "If the world be promiscuously [that is, indiscriminately] described, I cannot see of what use it can be to read the account; or why it may not be as safe to turn the eye immediately upon mankind, as upon a mirror which shows all that presents itself without discrimination".[129] Discrimination or selectivity is essential for realism of this kind, and it forms a mean between "promiscuous" realism and the literature of transcendence. Johnson finds fault in the latter, as exemplified by Milton, because "the want of human interest is always felt" ("Milton", 464). The problem posed by Paradise Lost is the depiction of good and evil, where there exists a confusion between spirit and matter. Pure good and pure evil are inhuman and cannot be embodied in character as human virtues and vices can.

> He.[Milton] saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This being necessary was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system by keeping immateriality out of sight...[but]...his infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit and sometimes animated body. (464)

The confusion arises when we see spirits performing both human and superhuman activities.

---

[129]"Rambler 4" in Rasselas Poems and Selected Prose, 63

Spirits are "causes" (465); human beings are agents and can be both causal agents and subject to cause themselves. Because human agents have both body and mind, we see them acting and being acted upon. Spirits, however, cannot be seen to act unless they are embodied, and if they are embodied, they cease to be spirits. The essential point here is one of dramatic representation, for what cannot be embodied cannot be dramatically rendered. Johnson admits that allegory can "exalt causes into agents", but allegorical figures can only perform their office and retire: "To give them any real employment or ascribe to them any material agency is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity".[130]

Johnson's criticism of allegory is tied to his belief that vice and virtue must be seen to be dramatically embodied in human action. The principle is originally Aristotle's. The question of the representation of good and evil, although an issue in the Republic of Plato, was first connected to dramatic action by Aristotle. It derives first of all from his notion of the effect of the plot. In discussing tragedy, Aristotle argues that the effect of the drama must be to arouse pity and fear ("terror" in Johnson's terminology). While we must keep tragedy and realistic fiction distinct, the effect of Aristotle's remarks bears on both forms because he is concerned that we recognize ourselves, or our possible selves, in the agents of drama. Each genre may then be said to have its particular effect or element of "surprise", as Johnson puts it, which appeals to the imagination and gives us pleasure. In realistic fiction this element is attained by our recognizing the original being imitated; however, the power of the example is great and requires the ethical content to temper what could potentially overexcite the fancy. Aristotle connects the attainment of pity and fear in tragedy to the type of character represented, who can be neither too good nor too evil. If tragedy befalls someone too good, our response is not pity and fear, but repulsion; and the defeat of villainy is also

---

[130] "Milton", 465. Yvor Winters points out that allegorical figures often have an arbitrary relationship to the virtue or vice they are supposed to represent. He cites examples in Spenser and Dante where only a vague association exists between the figure and the attribute he represents, and Winters shows this to be a failing in the allegorical method itself. Yvor Winters, The Function of Criticism (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1957) 40-47.

untragic because we cannot feel pity when evil meets its just deserts.[131] In order to feel pity we must recognize in the protagonist some of our own possible shortcomings, and in order to feel fear we must be able to acknowledge that such a fate could befall us. The relevance of this account to realistic fiction is that even in tragedy, which represents men as better than they generally are, ethical effect must be connected to what is recognizably human. It follows that in realism, which represents men as they are, the need to stay in the realm of ordinary human failing is even greater. In both genres, characters must attract in us a sense of fellow human feeling, which we cannot feel when extremes of good and evil are represented.

**B. Character, Plot and Action**

It now remains to be seen, once the necessity of restricting character representation to human vices and virtues is admitted, how the ethical element is realised in a work of literature. In Aristotle's aesthetics, the ethical element in drama must be subordinate to the plot, which is the soul of a work. By emphasizing this hierarchical relationship, Aristotle asks of a writer that he integrate the ethical element into the work's aesthetic structure so that a connection is established between the choices characters make and the action which results from their choices. The action constitutes the plot, while the ethical element or ethos provides motivation for the action.[132] The ethos of a character is important because it reveals his moral nature, but for Aristotle moral life must be, ultimately, activity. Activity arranged as plot should be the *telos* of a dramatic work. Aristotle insists on the distinction between plot and ethos because the effectiveness of drama depends on activity: without activity there cannot be drama in the precise sense he advocates. But does the distinction apply as strictly to the novel, particularly to Austen's? In spirit, Aristotle's distinction ought to be upheld because it

---

[131]S.H.Butcher adds: "Goodness, with its unselfish, self-effacing tendency, is apt to be immobile and uncombative. In refusing to strike back it brings the action to a standstill". Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York: Dover, 1951) p.310.

[132]Stephen Halliwell argues that ethos "is a specific moral factor in relation to action, not a vague or pervasive notion equivalent to modern ideas of personality or individuality--least of all to individuality, since ethos is a matter of generic qualities (vices and virtues)". Aristotle's Poetics (London: Duckworth, 1986) 151.

represents an attempt to render a work's ethical quality simultaneously an aesthetic quality. Aristotelian aesthetics tacitly oppose the "Ramist" tendency to disparage literature by seeing it as an ornament by which ethical matter can be conveyed more sweetly than by nonartistic means. Art on this view becomes a mere plaything for childish minds rather than a serious adult activity. While upholding Aristotle's distinction, we shall try to emphasize the connection between plot and ethos rather than their separateness.

The passage in the Poetics which draws the distinction between plot and ethos makes evident the influence of the Ethics on Aristotle's aesthetic thought.

> Tragedy in its essence is an imitation, not of men as such, but of action and life, of happiness and misery. And happiness and misery are not states of being, but forms of activity; the end for which we live is some form of activity, not the realization of the moral quality. Men are better or worse, according to their moral bent; but they become happy or miserable in their actual deeds. In a play, consequently, the agents do not perform for the sake of representing their individual dispositions; rather, the display of moral character is included as subsidiary to the things that are done. (24)[133]

The connection between the Poetics and the Ethics is evident from Aristotle's belief that literature imitates the moral life to show how men act because the primary dramatic interest is in seeing them perform good or bad deeds. We get a sense of their happiness or misery when we observe how their moral qualities are made evident by action. Aristotle is not disparaging character, but he is concerned to show that tragedy must have an end, which is to represent action, and it does this by having a well-constructed plot. But even though action is the *aim* of tragedy, tragedy as a whole, as opposed to particular plays, ought to include moral and

---

[133]Aristotle's reasons for elevating plot become clearer in a subsequent passage in which he speaks of contemporary drama which lacks character but has plot, and then that which overemphasizes character at the expense of plot. The tragic effect will be achieved without character, but not without plot; nevertheless, lack of characterization is a serious defect and usually involves the representation of mere stereotypes or "flat" characters without any inner substance. This passage (24-25) shows that Aristotle did not believe that all tragedy has plot and characterization, but that it should have both.

intellectual elements. The moral element will include one of the intellectual virtues (practical wisdom), but will be strictly separated from the intellectual element per se (dianoia), which has no bearing on moral choice: happiness is attained by moral quality (the irrational virtues) with the aid of practical wisdom. Ethos and dianoia are respectively the moral and intellectual virtues (the former including practical wisdom). Two things are capable in tragedy of displaying moral and intellectual character: action and speeches. Action reveals the ethical element, but not the intellectual; speeches can sometimes reveal the ethical element, sometimes the intellectual, but they will be mutually exclusive.

> The intellectual element [dianoia] must be clearly distinguished from the ethical element [ethos] in the drama, for the latter includes only such things as reveal the moral bias of the agents--their tendency to choose or avoid a certain line of action in cases where motive is not otherwise evident. And hence the poet has no need to employ the ethical element in speeches where the agent is neither choosing nor avoiding a line of action. The intellectual on the other hand, is manifested in everything the agents say to prove or disprove a special point, and in every utterance they make by way of generalization. (26) [134]

The distinction between ethos and dianoia is clear if we bear in mind the argument of the Nicomachean Ethics that, within the rational soul, the power to affect ethical action belongs to practical reason alone and not to its other parts. [135] Moreover, practical reason underlies virtuous action, but emotion is the actual motivating force: through the moral virtues themselves, through having the right moral bent, we make the right choices and become happy. Practical reason is a means towards having the right moral character, but we do not

---

[134]In his "To Be or Not to Be" speech, Hamlet deepens the intellectual content of the play, but the speech reveals nothing about the choices of action he must make. Hamlet is not here contemplating suicide because he has already rejected that course as being against God's law (i,ii,131-132). He is therefore making generalizations about the condition of man. If we could correctly suppose him to be contemplating and rejecting suicide, then we could say that his ethos is being revealed.

[135]However, there is considerable controversy among scholars of the Poetics who know Greek as to what Aristotle means exactly in this passage and whether he consistently maintains the distinction between ethos and dianoia. For a discussion on this, see Gerald F. Else, Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957) 251-274. I follow Else's reasoning in what follows.

actually deliberate or choose to have the characteristics we do. Thus in tragedy, as in life, dianoia has nothing to do with choice but is revealed when characters construct arguments and make generalizations where there is no moral choice to be made.

This is Aristotle's justification for the distinction between ethos and dianoia; it is based on his theory that the intellectual part of the soul (excluding practical reason) does not influence ethical choice. But it should not be assumed that for Aristotle, there is no connection between virtue and intelligence. He points, for example, when introducing the general topic of dianoia, to a change that took place in the history of tragedy up to his time:

> Third in importance comes the intellectual element. This corresponds to the power of the agent to say what can be said, or what is fitting to be said, in a given situation. It is that element in the speeches of a drama which is supplied by the study of Politics and the art of Rhetoric; for the older tragic poets [Sophocles, for example] made their heroes express themselves like statesmen whereas the modern [including Euripides] make theirs use the devices of the rhetoricians. (*Poetics*, 26)

The antithesis between speaking politically and speaking rhetorically has repercussions for the separation of ethos and dianoia: it is not that Sophocles' characters speak like politicians as we know them, but that they say what is appropriate to reveal their ethical bent. In having characters reveal their moral selves in speeches, the "political" dramatists complicate the distinction between ethos and dianoia. Their characters are intelligent and powerful speakers who show their moral intelligence more than their wit and rhetorical abilities. Where the statesman *reveals* his ethical self through his speeches, the rhetorician gives the *impression* that he has a particular character as a means of enhancing the persuasive effect of his speech. He does not have to be the character he suggests he is in order to persuade successfully. Aristotle says that modern tragedies are characterless, and we can now say what one meaning of this term might be: those plays where ethos is simply an effect of speaking well emphasize the image or manners of an agent over his ethical character.[136] Moral choice happens to be

[136]The contrast with those characters in Austen's novels who play on manners without the underlying character traits that manners imply immediately suggests itself here.

predominantly motivated by habit, but behind habit lies the *moral* intelligence of the agent. The "political" play, unlike the "rhetorical" play, will show its characters to be high-minded and not simply plausible speakers.

In noting the subordination of dianoia to ethos in certain plays, Aristotle is concerned that tragedy include strong characterization. Nevertheless, that the tragic effect needs only a character type[137] is a clear indication of the primary importance of plot over character. A plotless drama would have no linking thread enabling each event to be seen in causal relationship with each other. So although Aristotle says that the universality of tragedy resides in its depiction of character types, clearly for him it is not their character but what they do and how their actions are threaded together that enables the work to represent in coherent form an aspect of human life. We can, however, detect from Aristotle's nostalgia for the "ethos" represented by the older poets compared to the "rhetoric" of his contemporaries that he values ethos highly. The importance of the role of character should be upheld despite Aristotle's clear insistence that plot is not only the goal of tragedy, but the only justifiable point on which different plays can be compared.[138] At stake is the audience's capacity to respond sympathetically to a character's plight.[139] While character type is important in that it brings universality to a work (and is, of course, the means by which a plot is generated) individualizing a character is also significant because we respond more sympathetically to a fully-rounded character than to a type. The classic, therefore, will achieve as its primary goal an integration of type and character: that is, it will have a plot which develops

---

[137]"the representation of what a certain type of person is bound to say or do in a given situation" (*Poetics*, 31-32).

[138]Critics, he says, should compare complication, denouement, reversals, and other aspects of plot--see Poetics, 61.

[139]De Quincey feels that sympathy for characters in Greek drama is difficult because they are bound by fate: " the central pivot of character was obliterated, thwarted, cancelled by the dark fatalism which brooded over the Grecian stage...Powerful and elaborate character would have been wasted, nay would have been defeated and interrupted by the blind agencies of fate." Quoted by Butcher in Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 356. Yet there is also a sense of wilfulness about the way Greek tragic heroes put on the mantle of fate, as if they realized that they had a particular destiny to fulfill. Oedipus, for example, is determined to face the truth about himself, and although he is naturally enough fearful of the consequences, he does not shirk from this sense of responsibility. Our sense of a hero's tragedy depends on his being responsible for his own shortcomings.

characterization within its structure.

The demand for fully-rounded characters is explicit in Johnson's criticism of Milton's figures, in Winters' critique of representation in allegory, and in Edinger's assessment of what he calls "conceptual overdetermination" in allegory, where a character's destiny merely fulfills the conceptual scheme of the author. This type of representation occurs when an author limits character to represent a type. No psychological explanation is offered for why the character is what he is: he just stands for a particular quality for the purposes of moral exemplification.[140] We are not invited to read into the character any complex motivation, and what the character does is determined by his type. The representation of ethos in classical literature, on the other hand, can be seen as both individualised and integrative. Walter Jackson Bate speaks of classical notions of sculpture whereby the classicist aims at achieving a finished ideal by representing the particular. This is not abstraction, as in allegory, but integration.

> It [classical sculpture] endeavours...to picture, in the light of an ideal, the total capacity of the human figure, and to endow it with that completeness which would have originally been formed and determined only by multifarious and rounded activities. It seeks to offer a concluded and integrated synthesis of all ideal human aspects, which since they cannot be articulated in single performances without the exclusion of some of them and the loss of completeness and unison, are presented, as it were, potentially rather than kinetically, and as in perpetual readiness rather than in active execution...The spirit, the ideal, is neither a means nor a reaction: it is an end, a fruition. It signifies the *ethos* or "character"--which is eternal and changeless--rather than the *pathos* or feeling, which is passing and in flux. And from the revelation of the potentialities of this fruition, of this changeless *ethos*, and from the subduing and disciplining of these potentialities to the consonance and decorum of the ideal, arise the inherent finality, the repose, and serenity, which are the

---

[140]As Winters says, it is sometimes difficult to see *how* the figure exemplifies the quality because, as is typical of allegory, he does not *act* in a way that suggests the qualities he is supposed to represent, he just appears.

properties of classical sculpture, architecture, and writing.[141]

This perpetual readiness for integration, if applied to fictional characters, shows their potential to achieve the ideal--for in the course of a narrative, their realization of the ideal is in the future, at the end when everything comes together. And Bate's remark that statues are presented "potentially rather than kinetically" does not mean that characters should be static rather than active. The point is that "single performances", the representation of individuals, is at odds with integration of that individual into a type--there is a tension between the universal and the particular. The stasis is achieved at the end of the narrative, but the process of the narrative sees the character, as potential, struggle towards the ideal. And the final integration is one of character as ethos with plot and ideal, or, to put it another way, the integration is of the human, the aesthetic and the moral.

The beginnings of this integration can be seen in the notion of proportion: the ideal in the sculpture is partially expressed through proportion, and correct proportion is a necessary condition for achieving beauty in the plastic arts. In considering how beauty depends upon proportion, Aristotle in the Poetics draws an analogy between proportion in living creatures or in natural objects and the plot of tragedy: " as an inanimate object made up of parts, or a living creature, must be of such a size that the parts and the whole may be easily taken in by the eye, just so must the plot of tragedy have a proper length "(*Poetics*, 29). Proportion and length of plot are somewhat artificial demands because they both depend on the subject being imitated. Nevertheless, we can speak of correct length and proportion in terms of what the human eye or human endurance can tolerate. Just as beauty relies on proportion, so unity of action relies on proportionate length: in fact, as Aristotle proceeds to remark, the natural limit of imitated action is what makes it possible to achieve "a series of incidents linked together in a probable or inevitable sequence" (*Poetics*, 29). When action is in proportion, its parts fit together to create a unified, aesthetic whole. And this whole is the achievement of universality.

---

[141] From Classic to Romantic, 19-20.

We can now begin to unravel why Bate says that classical representation is potential rather than actual. When the classical writer creates a character, he attaches a proper name to him (Hektor, for example) and individualizes him by giving him a certain ethos (in this case, a mixture of bravado and caution in battle). Now it is not enough to render the character typical at the start, that is, static and unchanging. He becomes typical in performing certain actions and saying certain things so that, as Aristotle says, he becomes what a certain type of person is likely or bound to do in a certain situation.[142] In "doing", the character integrates himself into the action, into the plot. What he does is not isolated from the whole, and it is this integration that makes all action morally relevant to the whole story. Moreover, the universality of classical art depends on its closedness. Aristotle marks poetry as more universal than history because history must ignore unity and causal relationship between events for the sake of depicting real events chronologically with no necessary or probable connection between them. A work of literature contains the universal and does not look beyond itself, whereas history must include all that actually happens.[143] The idea that literature does not look beyond itself parallels what Hegel means when he says of classical art that the "sensible expression" is adequate to the idea that it gives expression to and does not point vaguely beyond itself: "In sculptures of the human body--the ideal is realized in the form itself".[144] So the parallel between integrated representation in sculpture and unity of plot can be seen in the way plot causes a character's actions to be integrated. By being part of the plot, a character's actions work towards the ideal. This is not to say that plot, in its aesthetic aspect, pretends to attain the kind of visual beauty achieved by the plastic arts in a statue of the human figure. Nevertheless, the character in classical drama is supposed to represent his ethos not only as

---

[142]Hektor, for example, does on the battlefield in the Iliad what a great warrior is supposed to do--kill a lot of his enemies. However, he also knows when the odds are against him, and he feels no qualms about retiring when it is prudent. He typifies Aristotle's courageous man rather than the reckless man.

[143]This notion of history would not sit well with modern theorists who stress the selectivity of history and its use of narrative techniques. Aristotle means presumably that if something of historical importance happens, the historian is bound not to ignore it. He probably had no idea that historical events might be important for some and not for others.

[144]G.W.F. Hegel, "Lectures on Aesthetics" in The Philosophy of Hegel ed. Carl J.Friedrich (New York: The Modern Library, 1953) 377.

his inner self, but also as his outer form.

The importance to classicism of the outer form is emphasized by Hegel when he distinguishes classic from romantic and symbolic forms of art on the grounds of character representation. In symbolic forms, which would include fable and allegory (although Hegel is thinking primarily of myth), characters appear as personifications, simple abstractions or "spiritual generalities". Virtue is not represented in character itself, but character, as a symbolic object, refers away from itself to an order beyond. The symbolic form is thus close to the Platonic view of the world where the sensible world is just an indicator of a truth outside it rather than a container of truth. The classical form and its world view is closer to Aristotle's system whereby truth is revealed in the world itself. In classicism any external representation--any concrete or bodily form--contains an idea, or, in Hegel's terms, a spirit. From this analysis emerges Hegel's idea of character. The archetype of the classical form is the representation of the Greek gods; the gods, says Hegel, "are not simple abstractions--mere spiritual generalities--they are genuine *individuals*"(his emphasis). The Gods have clearly defined natures or characters, and "the attributes, the specific qualities which result therefrom, constitute the distinctive character of each divinity".[145] According to Hegel, the Greek gods are both representative and individual. In his terms they represent a dialectical antagonism of sorts between the universal and the particular. In theory, classicism is the only form in Hegel's (admittedly broad) categories where the tension between universal and particular may be seen.

Where the classical form must uphold in its characters the value of decorum and manners, romantic art depreciates classical notions of beauty - of proportion and harmony--and introduces the "storm and turmoil" of the subject, which includes representation of the ugly.[146] In the novel of subjectivity, classical notions of form, especially

---

[145] The Philosophy of Hegel, 347. Hegel may be thinking here primarily of the way gods are represented in Homer, who individualizes them by not only giving them definite bodily characteristics ("grey-eyed Athena"), but also by giving them specific temperaments--Zeus tends to be hot-tempered, Posiedon vengeful, and so on.

[146] But romantic art does not, as classical literature does, imitate horror and immorality as inescapable facts of life; rather, it deliberately distorts because it wishes to violate the order and harmony upheld by classical art.

plot structure, theme and characterization, are deliberately violated to explore the inner spirit of the individual. In its romantic form, the novel presents the world only as it is sensually apprehended by the subject, and it is here that the opportunity to distort reality arises. The romantic novelist no longer allows the external world to be independent of what Hegel calls the subject's "freaks of imagination and caprice".[147] Hegel's word for this spiritually self-centred being is *subjectivitat*, a concept which includes the notion of subjectivity or what it is that individualizes a person. The difference between the romantic concept of individual and the classical is that the latter must include what Hegel calls "the external element" as well as an inner self. This "external element" amounts in the classical idea to treating the external world and one's role in it with utter seriousness. The classical emphasis is on the human form, and Hegel maintains that the human form must be employed in a way that corresponds to its mind: "The outer shape must...be qualified to express itself completely in the physical form of man, without projecting into another world beyond the scope of such an expression in sensuous and bodily terms".[148] Classicism requires that a character have material form which represents an idea. This creates an *analogy* between characterization and the plot of a work, and it also creates an essential *connection* between them. The character represents an idea and in so doing takes a certain shape; body (shape) and soul (idea) are thereby harmonized. The soul is prior to the body in that the soul gives it its shape and causes it to act; in the same way, the plot is the "soul" of tragedy since it is prior to and since it shapes the action. This is substantially the analogy George Whalley notes, and to it must be added the connection that the character's actions are the shape of the tragedy which has been determined by its plot.[149] Thus the complete character (body and soul) shapes the drama, or rather his actions are the shape of the drama which has already been formed by the plot.

---

[147]The Philosophy of Hegel, 382. For all its brilliance, Wuthering Heights is perhaps an example of such distortion. But Emily Bronte appears to wish future Heathcliffs and Earnshaws to get a grip on the world.

[148]Philosophy of Hegel, 379.

[149]George Whalley, "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*", Studies in Literature and the Humanities (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985) 71.

In essence, the relationship between plot and character is reciprocal in that plot cannot exist without the action of characters, but action cannot have form without plot. Yet this reciprocity can be maintained only within a system of priorities such as Aristotle's. He makes plot prior to action because plot is an actuality and action is potentiality; analogously, the soul is an actuality while the body is a potentiality. This means that plot and soul are the *form* into which action and the body are respectively shaped. Form, for Aristotle, is not the same as the matter which constitutes it, but is what matter becomes when it takes shape. A statue's matter is bronze, or marble, or stone and this matter is what persists; the end designated for the matter, however, is to take a definite shape, which is its form. According to Aristotle, "matter exists in a potential, just because it may come to its form; and when it exists actually, then it is in its form" (*Met.*, 1050a 15-18). Everything in Aristotle's system has an end, and that end is action, but "action" in a special sense: "For the action is the end, and the actuality is the action, which is why the word "actually" is derived from "action" and points to the complete reality" (*Met.*, 1050a 22-25). The distinction between actuality and potentiality is derived from the ability of substances to act causally: all substances have power, and a substance is what can be individuated or separated from qualities that owe their existence to it. The power of the substance derives from its potency to change things.

> For everything that changes is something and is changed by something into something. That by which it is changed is the immediate mover [the efficient cause]; that which is changed, the matter [the material cause]; that into which it is changed, the form [the formal cause]. (*Met.*, 1069b 36--1070a 2)

Although matter is substance's most endurable quality and is what makes substance identifiable to the senses, it is still a quality and therefore dependent on the substance's existence. The form of a substance is its soul, which in turn is its realization or actuality. Once the substance realizes its form, it has fulfilled its function. As we know, the function for man is normative and is the subject of the Ethics. We also saw that man realizes his function because other men have realized theirs: the form of man is a universal abstracted

from particular men who have carried it (albeit temporally) in them.[150] And to be a form is also to be a self-sufficient, concrete individual--a combination of soul and body with soul driving the body towards actuality.

For a human substance to achieve realization in life depends on his acting causally to fulfill his function. There are, of course, many ways he can go wrong. The difference between the uncertainty of human life and the moulding of life that takes place in a fictional narrative is that in literary fiction, the author oversees the process of potentialities becoming actualities. His conception is the goal to which his characters move--their end is the final cause which is in the mind of the author when he conceives the plot. In life, however, an uncertainty exists because of the very nature of what it is to be a rational rather than an irrational potency. Remembering that in Aristotle's system the principle of potency is to change or be changed, the two types of potency differ in this: that while the irrational can achieve only one result, acting or being acted upon, the rational potency can admit of contraries. A hot thing can produce only heat, but a doctor can use medicine to produce both health and disease. Now a rational potency does not want to produce both contraries, but only one. So when it comes time to act, the rational agent acts on desire and choice:

> For whichever two things the living being desires decisively, it will do, when it is present, and meets the passive object, in the way appropriate to the potency in question. Therefore, everything that has a rational potency, when it desires that for which it has a potency and in the circumstances in which it has the potency, must do this. (*Met.*, 1048a 11-15)

Desire or purpose must therefore intervene to prevent the rational potency from doing

---

[150]H.H.Joachim, Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1951) 182. For Aristotle, the form of humanity exists in individuals but cannot be equated with particular human beings. Each person can possess the fully realized form, but the form itself is timeless, while human beings are mutable. This provides the sense in which human beings can be both individualized and exemplary. Still, Aristotle believed that to understand *man* per se, we must understand the form--we will not understand the form by examining one particular individual. Or, to put it another way, an individual like Socrates may carry with him the form, but he is not identical to it.

contrary things. As Joachim points out,[151] a rational capacity cannot react without desire to a catalyst otherwise both contraries will occur at the same time. But does Aristotle mean that once desire intervenes, the alternative chosen necessarily occurs? or that the desired outcome is always of necessity uncertain? The passage from the Metaphysics makes it look as though the first alternative is the correct one. But Joachim remarks that the original distinction between rational and nonrational potencies depends on a strict difference between those that cannot be otherwise and those that can: "In the latter sphere, within which all human action falls, there are no necessary laws, but at most general rules, regularities and uniformities admitting, indeed involving, exceptions, breaches of the uniformity" (Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics, 111).[152] If the telos of human activity is devised by humans alone, without the aid of God, the element of uncertainty will remain however well-planned their lives may be; they can find the best way to happiness, but not the certain way.

In fiction, the author can remove this element of uncertainty and "play God" by having his characters fulfill whatever goals have been preordained in the conception of the plot. In ordaining a certain outcome for the novel's action, the plot is a whole which represents the realization of the action. But the plot is not only a whole; it is also a process: while the novel is being read, the plot unfolds gradually as characters appear to make their choices and *cause* the action. The agency of action appears not to be the plot as a whole (that is, the author's conception), but character and fate. If the plot is not contrived or obvious, the reader will not be able to see where it is logically leading. The author ensures that the plot has its own logic in that while it is ultimately under his control, events may suggest other events or may entail other events even if the author wishes an alternative outcome. He can in general secure a favourable outcome for his favourite characters, but if he does so as ***deus ex machina***, his presence will be too obvious and the plot seem too much under his control. The

---

[151]Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics, 108-111.

[152]This accords with the nature of what constitutes the ethical life outlined in the Nicomachean Ethics. Practical wisdom, which leads to the good life, is concerned with things that can be other than they are: things that can change from something to something else. The very possibility of becoming human in the full, normative sense that Aristotle attaches to that term depends on there being ends, which in turn implies a direction towards change.

trick is to imitate life to the extent that control appears to be absent.

Two factors advance creation of the effect of realism: authorial distance and character development. Authorial distance will produce a sense that events unfold according to their own logic, and strong characterization will make it appear that characters have some control over the outcome as they make their choices and act. Speaking of the logic of events means that an element of chance should be allowed for--in practice, no "logic" at all, but a sense that things do happen beyond human control as they seem to sometimes in life. The author thus arranges matters so that characters can be both efficient causes and also experience things out of their immediate control. Their mettle will be tested by how they act as causes and how they react to destiny. Alluding to the "erosions of contour" which Nietzche praises in a work of literature, Edwin Muir speaks of the importance of a fiction writer not trying to create too symmetrical a plot which makes it look as if he were too much in control.

> The lines of action must be laid down, but life must perpetually flood them, bend them...If the situation is worked out logically without any allowance for the free invention of life, the result will be mechanical, even if the characters are true. [153]

Allowing life's caprices does not mean that the novel becomes merely a reflection of life, but rather the logic of the plot comes to life by seeming as natural as possible. The demands of realism, in short, conflict with the demands of conceptual control, but the conflict is lessened as the author appears to relinquish control.

If the conflict between conceptual and realistic demands is important to understand the motive for various authorial techniques of disguise, the conflict should not be overstated. It never arises because there is a burning need in most authors to be in absolute control of their puppets. Nor is this need perpetually in conflict with their readers' demand that events be portrayed in a sequence as disconnected as life. Few authors want that much control, few readers that much incoherence. The author relinquishes the possibility of total control to appeal to the reader's need for realistic content. The need for realism is tied to sympathetic engagement; the first principle of imitating human life is that characters appear to be in

---

[153]Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963) 48.

control of their lives, not someone's puppets. When we see a character appear to act as an independent agent, we sympathize; when we see one under the control of mechanical forces, we laugh. When we laugh, as we do at characters like Mr Collins, we distance ourselves from them.

An author, then, increases the possibility of creating sympathy for his characters if he employs indirect methods of presentation. The effectiveness of indirect methods in this respect creates an artistic problem for an author who, like Austen, wishes to create through her work the possibility of generalizing. A work must not be given over to generality to the extent that its characters lose their affective power. But as an "artistic" method, the generalizing power of characterization is diminished the more a character is individualized and does not do what is typical. Because Austen's virtuous characters are dynamic, they are less typical of virtue than her unvirtuous are of vice. Those who lack virtue are static by nature, but the virtuous must not seem so too if sympathy for them is to be maintained. In being dynamic, they must appear incomplete. Sometimes Austen will distance herself from her virtuous characters, so that she as narrative voice, and not they, stand for the complete system of virtue. As we will see, Pride and Prejudice loses some of its generalizing power when the narrative voice partially withdraws after the climax. Austen is inconsistent in her technique in this novel, creating problems not evident either in Mansfield Park, which is more consistently direct, or in Emma, which is more consistently indirect.

The need to accommodate the active role of the narrator in the moral novel requires a modification of the hierarchical structure of plot, ethos, and dianoia. An integrative approach to the question, such as that taken by R.S. Crane, allows a more flexible treatment of the three elements as they occur in the novel and does not insist on a parallel with tragedy.[154] Crane amends Aristotle's tendency to see different elements of drama as mutually exclusive. While it may be disputed that Aristotle is exclusivist, and, as we have seen, possible to see from his theory of tragedy as a whole that each part works in harmony, he nevertheless considers it a serious defect to have character, for example, more central than action. Crane

[154]R.S. Crane, "The Plot of Tom Jones" in Essays on the Eighteenth Century Novel, ed. Robert Spector (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965) 92-130.

manages to by-pass this question but remains within the spirit of Aristotle's aesthetics. To understand the difference between the spirit and the letter, we can compare Crane's view with that of Edwin Muir, whose Structure of the Novel is a more conventional Aristotelian approach to the novel. Muir is exclusivist in that of the three types of novel he distinguishes--the novel of action, the novel of character and the dramatic novel--only the latter is truly Aristotelian. In Muir's categories, the novel of action is comprised of detective stories or other action novels where "we are not interested in the main character but in what happens to him". Our curiosity is aroused by such stories and we take an "irresponsible delight in [their] vigorous events"(20). These novels evoke curiosity by situating events out of the normal run of civilized life, and are mere fantasy spectacles. In Aristotle's terms, they would correspond to the characterless tragedies he complains of, especially those which emphasize spectacle as well as plot. The second category comprises novels of character, in which "the plot is improvised to elucidate the characters" (27). Muir cites as an example Vanity Fair, whose plot Thackeray apparently made up as he went along. Finally, there is the dramatic novel, whose plot is based on the laws of tragedy (the novel of character owes a similar debt to comedy) even though they are often resolved by marriage. In the dramatic novel, there is no merely mechanical plot as in the novel of action, "all is character and all is at the same time action"(43). There is a definite reciprocal relationship between character and action that is not present in the other types of novel, which emphasize one at the expense of the other. A change in situation always involves a change of character, and the dramatic novel "will have an inner truth in so far as it traces the unfolding of character, and an external truth in as much as it is a just development of the action" (46).

While there is a correspondence between Muir's categories and Crane's, Crane does not show an obvious preference for one type of plot over another. He categorizes each type, moreover, not as types of novels, but as types of plot. The point is to emphasize that even predominantly character novels still have plots. In each plot (of any novel) "the particular temporal synthesis affected by the writer among the elements of action, character, and thought...constitute[s] the matter of his invention" (96). The plot is the final end which

allows everything in the novel to make sense. Crane loosens the meaning of plot from the mechanically worked out sequence of events to a synthesizing principle of action, character, and thought. The plot of action has as its synthesizing principle a completed change in the protagonist determined by character and thought; the plot of character is a completed process of change in the moral character of the protagonist, precipitated or moulded by action, and made manifest both in it and in thought and feeling; finally, the plot of thought has as its principle a completed process of change in the thought of a protagonist and consequently in his feelings, conditioned and directed by character and action.[155]

If we were to situate Austen's novels according to Muir's categories, all her novels would fall under the description of "dramatic novel"; indeed, Muir explicitly refers to Pride and Prejudice as the first dramatic novel. He distinguishes two types of character in the dramatic novel: those who are capable of change and hence capable of moving the plot, and those who are static. Those capable of change are also in some respects unchangeable, and this is why we see them both respond to events that occur independently of their agency and act as agents of change themselves. This accords with Aristotle's sense of what it is to attain the mean: that the virtuous character is unchangeable to the extent that virtue is a reflection of his character, but changeable in that the process of attaining happiness is one where a potential becomes an actuality through his own agency. In the major novels, though, the process of change is sometimes inward and sometimes outward. Here we need to refer to Crane's categories because Emma, for example, is much like his plot of character while Mansfield Park is more like his plot of action. The sysnthesizing process of Emma is Emma's moral development (her external situation does vary too, but the process of change within her is the most significant development). In Mansfield Park, on the other hand, the change in Fanny's situation, influenced by her character and thought, provides the final solution. Of the other novels, Sense and Sensibility is a mixture of both because Marianne's change is primarily inner, while Elinor's is primarily external. In Pride and Prejudice there is again a mixture: up to the climax where she reads Darcy's letter, Elizabeth undergoes internal change;

---

[155] "The Plot of Tom Jones", 96-98.

subsequently, though, the process of change is external as she has completed her internal change. Finally, Persuasion shows Anne's external change from her lack of romantic attachment to her becoming the wife of Wentworth. But whatever the orientation of the processes of change that takes place, it could not be said of any of the novels that plot is sacrificed to character or character to plot, and this accords with the spirit of Crane's categories because he explicitly rejects the idea that on principle one particular emphasis need involve the obliteration of another. Part of Austen's genius is that she can work her materials towards a synthesizing end and not an end which excludes elements necessary to an encompassing vision.

**C. Plot, Characterization, and AuthorialPresence in Pride and Prejudice**

Pride and Prejudice combines both plot of action and plot of character according to Crane's categories, and it also illustrates some techniques of authorial presence that allow Austen to comment both directly and indirectly. It cannot be claimed, though, that her methods in this particular work are typical, for she is not tied to any particular formula of narrative presentation. As Wayne Booth comments, Austen's "technique is determined by the needs of the novel she is writing".[156] To say that she looks back to a specific moral and aesthetic tradition does not mean that she slavishly follows conventions without regard to the requirements of her particular theme. Austen's novels are examples where a moral viewpoint functions within the limits imposed by novelistic art. The novel traditionally allows direct authorial comment, but there is an artistic and unartistic way to comment directly. Austen's way is artistic and Pride and Prejudice suffers when she withdraws much of her direct commentary.

The plot of Pride and Prejudice cannot be reduced to a sequence of primary events; a network of interrelated occurrences allows Austen to develop the different parts of her theme. The intricacies of plot make it distinguishable from story: the story is a sequence of causally related events, while the plot is the means through which the reader is acquainted with the

[156] The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961) 250.

story. [157] The story is the bare bones of the novel, while the plot constitutes all the methods used by the author to present the story and its connecting themes. Given this distinction, the author may halt the progress of the story to develop characterization, intellectual content, description of setting and other matters. An extreme example of halting the story is Tristram Shandy, where Sterne has characters freeze in the midst of a particular action so that Tristram can embark on one of his digressions. Such halting serves to illustrate the difficulty of reducing plot to story, and it might even be said that story is simply an aspect of plot because it may often seem that the story itself can be causally cohesive only with reference to plot developments; in Pride and Prejudice, the ordering of events is directly relevant to the ordering of plot.

The story's relevance to plot is seen in the difference between causal and accidental plot developments. We observed in the last section that events must seem to happen according to their own logic, but that characters must also be seen to cause events by the choices they make. Causal plot developments are those which develop the theme, be it through ethos or dianoia. A causal development through ethos will occur when a character's actions have repercussions, not only on subsequent events but also on the ethical structure of the novel. A causal development through dianoia will occur when a particular topic gets discussed or when a character contemplates moral questions. Accidental plot developments occur when circumstances throw characters together, and our interest is in how they react to the situation. Thus Elizabeth's refusal of Mr Collins bears on subsequent actions as it allows him to marry Charlotte, and it also leaves Elizabeth free to marry Mr Darcy eventually. As an act it also bears on Elizabeth's character in contrast to Charlotte's: the one standing firm against social pressures to marry for convenience, the other submitting to those pressures. In turn the action bears on one of the themes of the book, namely the right and wrong reasons for marrying. A development through dianoia occurs when characters discuss issues related to the theme--this is portrayed in Austen primarily through dialogue, but also through private contemplation such as Elizabeth's over Darcy's letter. An example of dianoia through dialogue would be the

[157]Victor Shklovsky, "Sterne's Tristram Shandy": Stylistic Commentary" in Russian Formalist Criticism--Four Essays (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) 57.

discussion between Jane and Elizabeth subsequent to Charlotte's acceptance of Mr Collins' proposal. In this case, the discussion makes explicit what was implied by Elizabeth's refusal of Collins, that "principle and integrity" are at stake (*PP*, 121). Finally, an accidental plot development would be when the Gardiners take Elizabeth to Derbyshire and are the indirect cause of her being united with Darcy. Here is a situation which occurs in spite of Elizabeth's wishes, and our immediate interest is in how Darcy and Elizabeth react to their chance encounter. Austen specifically mentions this incident at the end of the novel as the cause of their being united; of course it does provide the actual physical means, but the marriage is the resolution of all the conflicts in the novel that have acted causally towards that end.

A *plot* summary of Pride and Prejudice will therefore be an account not of the sequence of events but of the causal interaction of events. Causal interaction cannot but help include the effect of events on characters and how characters are developed in the course of the novel. But the summary should also show how characters themselves affect the action, both wittingly and unwittingly. In Pride and Prejudice, the plot of ethos dominates events until the climax, Elizabeth's realization of her mistake about Wickham and Darcy. The revelation occurs just after the half-way point in the novel, and is a climax of ethos. The first half of the novel is a plot of character, while the second half is a plot of action which determines the change in Elizabeth's situation. However, because the plot of action occurs between the climax and denouement, the action is anticlimactic even though intensified by Elizabeth's trip to Derbyshire and the elopement of Wickham and Lydia. Elizabeth's internal conflict has been the main focus up to now, and interest is suddenly made to switch from her ethos to her situation. Unlike Emma, for example, where the internal climax and the external resolution are almost simultaneous, in Pride and Prejudice there is a prolonged journey towards the external resolution of Elizabeth's conflict with Darcy. And when ethos becomes less and less the vital force behind the plot, some of the intellectual content goes with it, the plot being devoted now to action and resolution. After the climax, events are seen much more through Elizabeth's mind than was previously allowed, but in doing this the novel loses much of its generalizing power because the focus becomes too much on Elizabeth winning her man.

The narrator becomes more discreet, preferring to allow Elizabeth to speak for her. At the beginning of Chapter Nineteen of Volume Two, the narrator begins to draw on the consequences of unhappy marriages from Mr Bennet's example. In the next paragraph, Elizabeth takes over, but she cannot be impartial and is forced to reflect on the situation with pain in so far as it affects herself and her family:

> Had Elizabeth's opinion been all drawn from her own family, she could not have formed a very pleasing picture of conjugal felicity or domestic comfort. Her father captivated by youth and beauty, and that appearance of good humour, which youth and beauty generally give, had married a woman whose weak understanding and illiberal mind, had very early in their marriage put an end to all real affection for her. Respect, esteem, and confidence, had vanished for ever; and all his views of domestic happiness were overthrown...
>
> Elizabeth, however, had never been blind to the impropriety of her father's behaviour as a husband. She had aways seen it with pain; but respecting his abilities, and grateful for his affectionate treatment of herself, she endeavoured to forget what she could not overlook, and to banish from her thoughts that continual breach of conjugal obligation and decorum which, in exposing his wife to the contempt of her own children, was so highly reprehensible. But she had never felt so strongly as now, the disadvantages that must attend the children of so unsuitable a marriage. (*PP*, 209-210)

Elizabeth feels Mr Bennet's disillusionment directly, but she is not in a position to articulate from his example the wider issues surrounding unhappy and unequal marriages. This is practically the last time a general moral issue gets aired in the novel, which is now geared almost exclusively to bringing Elizabeth and Darcy (and Jane and Bingley) together. The contrast between the author's impressions and those of Elizabeth illustrates the point that characters may not always be in a position to make the necessary generalizations, and where it would be implausible to have them do it, the best recourse is for the author to comment directly. As Wayne Booth points out, "No character in Tom Jones, no character in Bleak

House, The Scarlet Letter, or War and Peace, knows enough about the meaning of the whole to go beyond his personal problems to any general view".[158] There is a parallel between the narrative voice in fiction and the chorus in Greek drama. Just as fictional characters cannot always plausibly explain the full significance of what happens to them, so it would be implausible to have dramatic characters analysing events as they occurred. Here, the dramatist can use his own voice through the chorus.

An alternative to direct judgement is irony, but a question exists as to whether irony is truly such an alternative, or, as Marvin Mudrick sees it, a means by which Austen can distance herself. According to Mudrick, irony as distance is the substance of her art, which she is capable of destroying through direct judgement. For Mudrick, Austen's first condition for writing was a detached irony, a refusal to commit herself, and a refusal to sympathize:

> If Jane Austen's irony appears at times almost inhumanly cold and penetrating, and her smile begins to resemble a rictus, it may be because we are accustomed to the soft and sentimental alloying of most irony. Sympathy is irrelevant to irony. Jane Austen's compulsion and genius is to look only for incongruity; and it delights her wherever she finds it.[159]

Mudrick does not say that Austen has no sympathy, but that her art is destroyed because she had no aesthetically satisfying way of showing it. When she does show it, she does so through direct commentary and direct intervention in moulding the plot for her moral purposes. In short, she destroys her art with her sympathy. But it is a moot point whether all such interventions are necessarily inartistic. Certainly Aristotle thought they were because the point of art is to imitate life, not to present the private opinions of the author. The real question, though, seems to be whether such intrusions are motivated, justified by the needs of the plot considered as an integrative unit. What bothers Mudrick is not so much intrusion because ironic reflection is itself a form of intrusion, but direct intrusion. And direct intrusion appears to undo, *uncreate*, the artistic subtlety of irony and other forms of indirectness.

---

[158]Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 198.
[159]Irony as Defence and Discovery, 2.

Let us take the opening chapter of Pride and Prejudice as an example. The author introduces the immediate events of the novel by speaking ironically in the assumed voice of the neighbourhood wives, who act as if they expected all wealthy bachelors who come to the area to marry one of their daughters. After the ironic preliminaries, the chapter proceeds without transition to the conversation between Mr and Mrs Bennet. Mrs Bennet acts as if she believes the universally acknowledged truth; Mr Bennet acts as her foil.

> "Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."
>
> "What is his name?"
>
> "Bingley".
>
> "Is he married or single?"
>
> "Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"
>
> "How so? how can it affect them?"
>
> "Mr dear Mr Bennet", replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them".
>
> "Is that his design in settling here?"
>
> "Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes". (*PP*, 1-2)

The conversation not only confirms, in the person of Mrs Bennet, the irony of the opening sentence, it also has Mr Bennet furthering the fun by pretending to be ignorant of the significance for them of Bingley's arrival. Mr Bennet is Austen's ally here in poking fun at Mrs Bennet, and the passage shows how the author can comment directly in her omniscient ironic voice and also indirectly through one or more of her characters. Although we learn a lot about Mrs Bennet through these indirect means, the matter does not end there, for she is

summed up at the end of the chapter directly:

> She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news. (*PP*, 3)

Presumably Mudrick would feel that this last passage is unnecessarily intrusive because we have already gained enough knowledge of Mrs Bennet from the irony. But does the irony do the whole job? It makes Mrs Bennet an object of fun, and it certainly involves our own, the author's, and Mr Bennet's assumption of superiority to Mrs Bennet. In and of itself, though, it does not begin to reveal some of the dangers that will be apparent in Mrs Bennet's character--dangers that almost ruin her daughters' happiness. The direct judgement, though restrained, shows Austen's hostility towards Mrs Bennet where her irony had simply made her an object of ridicule. Mrs Bennet's "mean understanding" is stupidity, her "little information" is ignorance, and her uncertain temper is neurosis. All these qualities point to the potential dangers of a person like Mrs Bennet, who although ultimately ineffectual, has the power to affect the lives of others. [160] The unspoken judgement conveyed by the irony is not specific enough to inaugurate the type of general point Austen needs to convey, which she does through direct judgement.

The objection, though, that direct intrusion is unartistic ought to be addressed because it has its roots in the model we have been working with. Aristotle argues that the dramatic mode itself should contain enough inferences to prompt the reader to make generalizations; it is therefore up to the reader, not the author, to make such inferences. Primarily we make these inferences through observing the dramatic representation of character, how the characters reveal themselves (ethos), and what generalizations they themselves make in their speeches (dianoia). This is the gist of the passage in the Poetics where Aristotle praises Homer for not speaking in his own voice apart from making a few preliminary remarks (Poetics, 79). Homer was apparently untypical among epic writers for not speaking in his own voice; as such, he was closer to the tragic mode than were his counterparts, and Aristotle uses

[160] As we will see, Mrs Bennet's power is of a different order than that bestowed on the virtuous characters.

Homer as his exemplary illustration of the epic form. Aristotle's insistence on the "dramatic" narrative form seems due partly to his allegiance to the epic's least typical representative, and partly to his belief that tragedy was exemplary among the literary arts.[161]

The real issue should be not whether narrators intervene, but their reasons for intervening: do they restrict their interventions to developing the plot in its broadest sense, in which case they are still imitative artists, or do they speak directly without any special artistic purpose? The writers of epic poetry in general, according to Aristotle, talk too much, and mere talk is not imitation, not universalizable artistic content, but special pleading. For the narrative voice to be part of the artistic whole, it must be part of the plot: not necessarily part of the fictional story (unless the narrator is also a character), but part of the integrated unit we have called the plot. The narrator can be absent only in an abstract sense, since the very organization of events implies his presence, as much for Ulysses as for Tom Jones:

> even where the characters are all dramatic, the narrative may appear in the disposition of scenes, as when one scene follows another with an effect of irony, or when one scene is set as a foil to another, and this sequence is not strictly probable. And, to go to the limit, we must say that any shift of scene at all introduces the narrator into the plot, since it distracts from the immediate presentation.[162]

The "immediate presentation" is the logic of events themselves, and this is preserved in drama by the three unities. But the scope of narrative fiction is, as Aristotle recognizes, much wider and more obviously requires the direct controlling hand of the author: the coherence of tragedy is built into the form by observing the unities, whereas narrative fiction can potentially cover a large amount of material. Homer, for example, could have written about the whole Trojan war in the Iliad, but chose instead to concentrate on the rivalry of Achilles and Hektor. This rivalry is the focus of the work and is always a potential development, but it does not constitute the work. The narrative builds up to this rivalry and is climaxed by the duel between the two generals. Such condensing requires, if not the vocal aid of the author,

---

[161]Gerald Else, Aristotle's Poetics: the Argument, 621.
[162]Paul Goodman, The Structure of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954) 160.

then his organizational abilities. Yet the realistic description of the battles and the parallel rivalry of the gods are two of Homer's most striking pieces of invention, even though not directly relevant to his focal rivalry. The battle between Achilles and Hector gives The Iliad unity, but Homer enriches it by exploiting the resources of epic writing. Just as the epic need not have all the qualities of a play, so the "dramatic novel" should be defined only by analogy with drama. If we are to make plays the models for novel writing, the novel will lose its distinctness as a genre. Novelists should consider all the devices at their disposal, not just limit themselves to those of an alien genre. So while it remains true that a dramatic novel will dramatize, it does not mean that it will limit itself entirely to the resources of drama.

Furthermore, in considering Austen's partiality for direct judgement, we should consider the preferences of her more immediate literary heritage. If we are right in tracing this to the Augustans, we may say of her as F.R. Leavis says of Johnson, that for him "a moral judgement that isn't stated isn't there".[163] Leavis' comment does not apply to Austen to the extent that it applies to Johnson, but it indicates that her immediate intellectual influences gave her the impulse to make direct statements, and she manages this impulse with some restraint in her novels. Her direct voice is used primarily as a generalizing device, where other means would be implausible; and her indirect voice is not, as Mudrick would have it, diametrically opposed to the direct one, but is an ally.

The alliance between her ironic and moral voices suggests that she is not as an artist disengaged, fearful of commitment, but a creative moralist. Mudrick associates the "real" Austen with Elizabeth's claim that "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies *do* [Austen's emphasis] *divert* [my emphasis] me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can" (*PP*, 50). Notice that Elizabeth does not say that this jocular spirit is her reason for being, but that it is a diversion. A diversion from what? Elizabeth tells us immediately beforehand: "I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good". Her primary reason for living is to discover what is wise and good, and her reason for saying what she says is Darcy's preceding remark, which is the true Austen speaking. "The wisest and best of men, nay the wisest and best of

[163]F.R.Leavis, "Johnson and Augustanism" in The Common Pursuit (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984) 111.

their actions, may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke". Austen would not say that her first object in life is a joke; she does not ridicule out of an acute sense of the absurd, but as part of her quest to discover the best in us. As I have argued, this is the classicist in her.

Indeed, it is not Austen or her surrogate Elizabeth who is the detached ironist of Pride and Prejudice, but Mr Bennet. Both Elizabeth and Austen are critical of the consequences of Mr Bennet's detachment, especially of his lack of responsibility as a father. Mr Bennet has become the detached ironist out of disappointment with his marriage partner. His solace, like the true philosopher, is not women or drink, but his library and his estate. Mr Bennet is not pathetic, but neither is he a model. He is indebted to his wife only in so far as "her ignorance and folly had contributed to his amusement" (*PP*, 209). Mudrick's point is that Austen is really like Mr Bennet in that she frees herself to laugh "at every exhibited incongruity of social behaviour without becoming involved or responsible".[164] But this ignores Austen's criticisms of Mr Bennet's refusal to try and improve his wife, just as it ignores Austen's attempts to discover ideals.

Nevertheless, Mudrick's analysis leads him to an important distinction. He says that Austen's freedom to ridicule arises because the objects of ridicule are not real people, but stock characters, and there is no damaging consequences in such laughter. The detatched ironist, he says, seeks incongruity, not as in life between essence and pretension, but between "the character as he is by literary convention and (explicitly and implicitly) the character as he would appear if we could bring him up against the world's own standard of behaviour".[165] But what Mudrick fails to bring out clearly is that while we can laugh at the comic aspects of the Bennets' relationship, we are also supposed to see the serious side. Mrs Bennet is a figure of fun, but at times she is made to seem positively destructive to the happiness of her family. Even Mr Collins, who comes closest to being a figure of pure fun, has his dangerous side. He has a definite worldly power which is a potential threat to Austen's moral fabric, and the threat is diminished because Austen designs things so that the moral fabric will survive against

[164]Irony as Defense and Discovery, 3.
[165]Irony as Defense and Discovery, 7.

the real threat of moral ignorance and moral indifference.

Mudrick's assessment provides an important clue to understanding the relationship between the real and the ideal in Austen's work. He cites Darcy as the primary failure of the novel, arguing that he never becomes more than a character borrowed from Fanny Burney (Orville, to be precise). "Darcy remains unachieved", he says, "we recognize his effects upon Elizabeth, without recognizing that he exists indepentently of them".[166] The primary argument for this point is that Darcy is not animated enough, and Mudrick devotes a substantial portion of his chapter to contrasting Elizabeth's vivacity with Darcy's stiffness. What we get in effect is Mudrick's preference for the lively characters (we get it also when he discusses Mary Crawford and Fanny Price later on), but not an argument showing that Darcy is derivative other than that he acts as saviour in the end. The stiffness that Darcy exhibits is something we could meet with in real life, and it surely cannot be for this trait that he falls under Mudrick's category of stock character. In fact we learn from Darcy himself that his stiffness and his sense of superiority is a product of his upbringing; he is self-conscious enough to recognize this and to be capable of more flexibility under Elizabeth's guidance. And his stiffness is a function of character, of ethos, for it creates one of the primary clashes that gets the plot moving. He is stiff, he is "Mr Darcy" the concept, but his stiffness does not define him any more than we would say that in real life a jealous man is defined by his jealousy.

If fiction attaches concepts to characters as part of the author's plan for the novel, they can nevertheless exist independently of the plan if it is not realized in a way that makes it look planned. The problem of combining realistic effects with artistic and moral effects is exacerbated by the fact that a character *is* a creation, and as such cannot really have a being apart from what the author has prescribed for him. We are dealing with an illusion, not a reality, and the difference is, as Martin Price says, that fictional characters "lack the substantial, opaque solidity of real persons".[167] Real people can never be reduced to universals

---

[166] Irony as Defense and Discovery, 117.
[167] "The Other Self" in Imagined Worlds eds Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor (London: Methuen, 1968) 292.

because in their very concreteness they can only *carry*, they cannot *be*, the universal. The classical model in fiction emulates the way which in real life we attach general concepts to individuals, but the model can never surrender its own laws to allow the characters full freedom of operation as if they did not have a function to serve. And perhaps only unwarranted philistinism would insist that art do what it can never do--recreate the world as it is. The illusion, though, can be artistically rendered, and its creation has much to do with how the author allows as much as possible the sense that events unfold and characters behave according to the laws of probability: *as much as possible* because the effect of realism is one, not the only, resource of fiction.

In contrasting fiction with the world we must assume that the world is largely disorganized and haphazard, whereas fiction encloses its world, however inconspicuously, in a moral framework. This commonplace assumption should be asserted against those who believe they can formally disorganize the novel in order to imitate life directly. But, as Johnson says, it is for its organization, its sense of discrimination, that we go to a novel instead of turning a mirror onto the world. Characters do not exist apart from this organization, but in so far as we do not see the mechanics of the plot in operation as we read, these characters will appear to be acting independently of the novel's end. In Austen's case, the creation of this effect is helped by the very nature of the virtues themselves: virtuous activity is pure action, not activity determined by a goal which has a lower order of ulterior motive.

Our sense of the independence of fictional characters is enhanced by the choices they make in action, so it seems that they, not the author, propel the plot. We see them act, and their action is given form in their being accorded a certain way of acting--their manners. We are then invited to probe beneath this surface, from the presentation of self to the actual state of the character's soul. We see the causal mechanism underneath the polished surface as when we take a clock apart to see how it works. We may find no discrepancy between manners and character, as in the case, say, of Fanny Price. When we do find discrepencies, the quest of the novel will be to dissolve the conflict between appearance and reality. We find such discrepencies in Mr Darcy at first, but a chastened Mr Darcy later self-consciously recognizes

his change when he says to Elizabeth:

> "What I do not owe to you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you I was properly humbled. I came to you without a doubt of my reception. You showed me how insufficient were all my pretensions to please a woman worthy of being pleased". (*PP*, 328)

On Darcy's confession hinges the theme of choice. He once believed that he could *choose* Elizabeth regardless of whether he deserved her or not. The way choices are made allows us to distinguish in Austen's novels her conceptually static and her conceptually dynamic characters.

All characters exercise choice, even if understood only in a limited sense of their choosing external goods. Choosing external goods is acting towards something that is external to the act itself: the act is a means towards a determined end. Seeking internal goods means that activity and purpose are one and the same. The contrast can be illustrated by analogy with Aristotle's distinction between movement and action. The end of movement is an object other than itself, as in the example of sculpting; action, on the other hand, is an end in itself because through action we become happy or unhappy. A choice directed towards external goods does not therefore produce action (that is, moral action) because it advances an external rather than an internal good. This is as much as to say that we cannot morally *choose* external goods when those external goods are legitimately bound up in moral relations. We cannot legitimately choose a wife or a husband by fixing them as our object and attaining them as we would some property. Our relationship with people is what gives us happiness; we can choose only the means to happiness--we cannot choose happiness itself.

Generally, those characters pursuing external goods actually choose their ends. This is illustrated in Mr Collins' attempts to find a wife, and he behaves as if marrying were simply a question of choosing. In the following passage, Mr Collins, having come to Longborn to generously offer himself to one of the Bennet girls in recompense for inheriting the estate, is immediately smitten by Jane: "and for the first evening *she* [Austen's emphasis] was his settled *choice* [my emphasis]." On being told by Mrs Bennet that Jane was not available: "Mr Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth--and it was soon done--done while Mrs

Bennet was stirring the fire. Elizabeth, equally next to Jane in birth and beauty, succeeded her of course" (*PP*, 62). Mr Collins' choice is made regardless of its objects' wishes, as if he were engaged in some kind of barter in the slave trade. When he finally comes to propose to Elizabeth, the word "choose" and synonymous words figure prominently: "Coming to Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife", "Chuse properly, chuse a gentlewoman", "I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife", and (with different connotations) "I shall chuse to attribute it [Elizabeth's refusal of him] to your wish of increasing my love by suspense" (*PP*, 94-98). Mr Collins' wilfull choosing is more like arbitrary selection than choice; even his decision to seek a wife was not his choice but Lady Catherine's. The significance attached to choice which prompts moral action is of a different order. To choose is to choose the means to something without regarding the end as a certainty. There is no necessary connection between means and ends, and this element of uncertainty is present in Aristotle's distinction between rational and irrational agents. The rational agent does not assume that the object of his choice will occur automatically as if choice necessitates attainment. Mr Collins is perhaps an egregious example in the novel of an irrational agent, but the same assumptions work with Mrs Bennet and even with the more "rational" Wickham. Wickham knows how to choose the means towards what he wants, but he assumes (presumably because it works) that his abilities to please will get him what he wants. The difference between Collins and Wickham is that Wickham is not deceived about his abilities, although he is deceived about what his abilities can attain, which is why he ends up with Lydia. Both men are indifferent (and this is the essential point) to what is human about human relationships. Both seek relationships for reasons other than what relationships are ideally supposed to bring--human connection. Wickham is as changeable in the objects of his choice as Collins is, depending on what he thinks he can get out of them.

The case of Wickham also involves the connection between manners and character: the way character *shapes* the type of person that is presented to the world. The discrepancy that exists in Wickham whereby he can copy the characteristics of a moral person's manners without being moral is not like the incongruence between the manners of a virtuous person

and his character. The virtuous can move towards a congruence, either between self and appearance or between self and their rightful place in the world, whereas Wickham is doomed, if he is to maintain his facade, to incongruity. But there is an interesting twist to this suggested by the example of Mr Collins. Incongruence in Collins can be mannered, but he continually betrays himself at the same time. His "correct", ritualized, behaviour reveals his stupidity. That aspect of his manner is what he owns himself and which cannot but help reflect his true character. This could also be said of Wickham: cleverer than Collins, he can deceive for a time, but his true self is inevitably revealed. What was initially seen as charming in his manners eventually becomes irksome. As Mr Bennet observes, "He is such a fine fellow...as I ever saw. He simpers, he smirks, and makes love to us all. I am prodigiously proud of him" (*PP*, 292). The incongruity between Wickham's character and his manners can be resolved because the moral forces working beyond him in the novel eventually expose him so that in the end he comes to seem like Mr Collins. Here, we might say, lack and excess end up as being mirror images of each other, and neither has an effect on the resolution of events because moral considerations are outside their sphere of operation.

The overt causality that typifies the actions of those who seek external goods is absent from the actions of the virtuous characters, who act causally on the plot, but do so in a way that makes it look like things happen to them. This has led to the charge against Austen that she manipulates her plots. But the virtuous cannot be seen to act causally towards their goals because this would make it look as if they had direct ulterior motives in acting, whereas *acting* is an end in itself.[161] Elizabeth refuses Collins out of principle, not because she contemplates marrying Darcy in the end. Her action is thus moral in and of itself and is not guided by a definite end (other than to be rid of Mr Collins' unwanted attentions). Her principled stand is a contrast to Collins' because he believes that a proposal is merely a ritual and that her refusal is conventional. Elizabeth is forced to assert the principle (with anyone else it would have been unspoken) when she says to him: "Do not consider me now as an elegant female

[161]In some cases, an ulterior motive is necessary to make the act a moral one, for example, when one is friendly to enhance the pleasure of others. An ulterior motive is morally questionable, though, if the intention is to appear moral while really seeking external goods.

intending to plague you, but as a rational creature speaking the truth from her heart" (*PP*, 98). Considered as an act, Elizabeth's refusal does not make her happy immediately but is a means towards her eventual happiness. In effect she is happy although she does not know it because her happiness has not yet materialized, which illustrates Aristotle's point in the Ethics that happiness may be something we acquire without knowing it as we choose consciously only the means, not the end.

At this point in the action, Elizabeth must still undergo an internal change which signifies her ability to respond to circumstances in a way compatible with her moral character. Edwin Muir speaks of a trait in true dramatic characters who respond to events in so far as they are unchangeable (because their characters are formed), but who also allow the plot to progress in so far as they are changeable. The dramatic character can be neither so fixed that he is unchangeable, nor so accommodating as to fluctuate at every move. A tension exists in these characters "between their completeness seen as fate, and their progression seen as development".[169] There could not be a dramatic novel about Mr Wickham because change in him could not develop the plot if he were the determining actor. His actions do not reflect a moral potential, but are governed by his (morally indifferent) self-seeking. There is nothing larger than his own material needs that his character could illustrate, except in contrast to a character who could develop and who, in dramatic fiction, would perforce become central.

A virtuous character may develop from moral potential to actuality and in so doing exemplify a virtue. Because those who are not virtuous cannot share this moral potential, the virtuous are independent of them, even though virtue is defined theoretically in relation to lack and excess. Aristotle stresses this independence when he says that despite certain ostensible similarities between some virtues and their lacks and excesses, virtuous activity is itself an excess. Virtue is independent of those activities which may resemble it, as when the reckless man resembles the courageous man. This resemblance is due to the need to define particular virtues by arresting them as if they were independent of a larger conception of humanity. Courage is needed to defend friends and family, and this need springs from a value

[169]Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel, 57.

for friendship and kinship which points to a larger sphere beyond the courageous act itself. Because there exists something beyond the particular action, it is hard to say the courageous *represent* courage as if they represented nothing else as well. Moreover, from the point of view of virtue, we have to stop to examine characters in action to make discriminations from which we can benefit. If anything is artificial about the classical model, this is it. When virtuous activity is imitated in fiction, a whole is represented by a particular--as Walter Jackson Bate suggests in his comments about classical sculpture, a series of activities are combined into a single moment. Similarly, when Elizabeth refuses Mr Collins, she is not *just* refusing Mr Collins, but combining various aspects of her character into one act. Muir says as much in speaking of the limitations Austen imposes on her novels:

> Without its built-in arena one could not evoke such a range of absoluteness of experience in its figures. Without the unchangeability of its types the other could not show us such clear-cut diversity of character and manners. It is here the static definition, the completeness of every character at every moment, that points to the diversity and makes it self-evident. To see sharply the difference between a multitude of living things we must arrest their movement. They must not change while we look, or the change will confuse our sense of distinction: difference will merge at times into identity, to disentangle itself and merge again.[170]

Muir captures the essence of what is "contrived" about the classical model of literature: a contrivance that at once encloses the arena of its operation but simultaneously suggests wider possibilities. It is a question of focus, of noting, as Mary Lascelles remarks, how the narrow can reverberate to the larger "like a stone dropped into a pool": "the narrator can show circles speading out from that point--can even show how these encounter windflaws that were disturbing the surface before the stone entered the water". [171] The most obvious act of closure in Austen's novels is her endings, which are the most difficult to achieve without being mechanical because all the conflicts have to be resolved almost with a stroke of the pen.

---

[170]The Structure of the Novel, 61.
[171]Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939) 196.

Perhaps endings in any form of literature, save those works which have no resolution, are the most difficult to contrive artistically as so much has to be brought together. The endings of moral novels probably can never be artistic in the way prescribed by advocates of the indirect method.

## Conclusion

Austen is part of a neoclassical tradition of literature with its roots in Aristotelian moral and aesthetic theory; her goal is to represent, through a realistic portrayal of eighteenth-century rural life, ethical ideals that derive from the Aristotelian tradition. But, while she is accurate in her depiction of certain manners and customs of her class, we should not assume that these mores alone inform her moral outlook. Even if we grant this accuracy, Austen's England was not the real England, except, as Lionel Trilling points out, "as it gives her a licence to imagine the England we call hers". We should not, he warns, "fail to recognize the remarkable force of the ideal that leads many to make this confusion".[172] The dynamism of Austen's novels lies in representing the ideal through Aristotle's account of the virtues, not in their factual accuracy. When Aristotle distinguishes poetry from history, he argues that the former portrays the universal while history can address only factual particulars. Literature in the Aristotelian tradition is therefore primarily aiming not to gather facts, but to represent artistically an idealized world; if a work in this tradition fails, it fails in its representation of the ideal, in its artistic conception, not in its failure to be historically accurate. Aristotle says as much in the Poetics when he speaks of what might constitute artistic failure.

> When an error is found, one must always ask: is the mistake adventitious, arising from ignorance in some special field of knowledge, or does it concern the art of imitation as such? If a painter thinks a female deer has horns, for example, that is less of an error than to fail to represent his actual conception. (*Poetics*, 85)

If the mistake is intrinsic to the work of art itself--if it is a failure of artistic conception--it fails in the realm of the ideal, which is the dynamic force behind the work. Aristotle's final sentence does not offer the artist an excuse to fail to represent the real accurately because he prefaces this statement by saying that the artist should if possible make no mistakes at all. But to fail to depict the ideal accurately is an *artistic* fault because the ideal is bound up with the artistic organization of the work.

---

[172]Lionel Trilling, "Emma" in Beyond Culture (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1967) 61.

We will not find in Austen's novels description for description's sake even though the comic form affords the writer an opportunity to dwell on the physical details of character and setting to create a comic effect. What description we get is almost always subordinated to advancing our knowledge of a character's values or to developing the theme. Like Johnson, she was against minute description for its own sake--the business of the poet is to examine the species, not the individual. Thus in Mansfield Park, when the party is approaching Sotherton in carriages, an opportunity arises to describe the grounds because Sotherton's "improvement" has been a topic of conversation. But the only description we get is a highly motivated one from Maria Bertram, who anticipates being mistress of the estate.

> "Now we shall have no more rough road, Miss Crawford, our difficulties are over. The rest of the way is such as it ought to be. Mr Rushworth has made it since he succeeded to the estate. Here begins the village. Those cottages are really a disgrace. The church spire is reckoned remarkably handsome. I am glad the church is not so close to the Great House as often happens in old places. The annoyance of the bells must be terrible. There is the parsonage; a tidy looking house, and I understand the clergyman and his wife are very decent people. Those are alms-houses, built by some of the family. To the right is the steward's house; he is a very respectable man. Now we are coming to the lodge gates; but we have nearly a mile to go through the park still. It is not ugly, you see, at this end; there is some fine timber, but the situation of the house is dreadful. We go downhill to it for half-a-mile, and it is a pity, for it would not be an ill-looking place if it had a better approach. (*MP*, 74)

Austen is much more concerned to tells us about Maria, about "improvement", and about enclosure than she is to describe the surroundings. Maria shows herself to be more concerned with minor annoyances than she is with the well-being of the community over which she shall be mistress: it is an attitude symptomatic of the mentality of "improvers". The passage has an immediate human significance, even though in this case it appears to be of local or historical significance. Behind this local significance lies a more general issue: Maria's attitude reminds us of a primary duty that we do not treat others as means to an end, but recognize

that others have their own ends. Austen herself was not against improvement, but she takes the opportunity to make a moral point at the expense of historical detail.

So, if the presentation of realistic description is subordinated in Austen's novels to the ideal, it is not plausible to argue, as Angus Wilson does, that the mores of her class were the source of her moral values. The evidence from her novels suggests, rather, that her own world rarely lived up to the moral standards set by the novels. Her culture was much too preoccupied with money and status; it subordinated women to a position of domestic drudgery; and it treated marriage as an economic rather than moral necessity. On top of this, she seemed to have little interest in the major historical events of her time--at least to the extent of including them in her novels. Considering that the Napoleonic wars, the industrial revolution, social and political upheavals were part of the life of England during her time, historical events rarely, if ever, play a significant part in her theme. She has been called a Marxist before Marx because in Mansfield Park she shows that Sir Thomas Bertram's fortune has been made partly by his holdings in the West Indies. But this fact is mainly significant for the plot: it gets Sir Thomas out of the way so that Mansfield can become a playground for trifling young aristocrats in his absence.

Austen's uncompromising moral integrity shows her having more affinity with Samuel Johnson than with her own time. This affinity is with the principle for novel writing stated by Johnson in Rambler 4, that where historical truth has no place in a novel, the novelist ought to present the highest and purest form of beauty that humanity can attain. Johnson's view amounts to a simplification of human virtues and vices, for he advocates a much stricter separation of virtue and vice than is ever found in the real world. Johnson regards this simplification as essential to the novel's moral purpose, especially because of its power to influence untutored minds. This attitude infuriates those who believe it to be the first duty of the novelist to make his moral outlook as complex as possible, but it was Johnson's belief that novel readers were primarily the young and ignorant; he probably had no notion that it was to become read mainly by the academically sophisticated in future centuries. And the literary novel has, in our time, become so complex that it is virtually impossible for the ordinary

reader to understand it without the aid of a university course.

But even though the neoclassical novel may be said to be a simplification of life, it does not mean that its practitioners were simple-minded or unaware of what they were doing. My purpose throughout has been to emphasize how the neoclassicist aesthetic presents a theoretical and moral framework by which to judge the actions of characters in particular works. And by these standards, some of those characters seem pitiful indeed especially when little attempt is made to excuse or redeem them. In fact, it is presumably the neoclassical aesthetic that George Eliot addresses when she says in an aside in Adam Bede that moral idealism has had a chilling effect on the novel.

> I would not, even if I had the choice, be the clever novelist who could create a world so much better than this, in which we get up in the morning to do our daily work, that [sic] you would be likely to turn a harder, colder eye on the dusty streets and the common green fields--on the real breathing men and women, who can be chilled by your indifference or injured by your prejudice.[173]

Eliot admits that art needs the exemplary "divine beauty of form", but she requires us to love "that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy" (177). The novel has generally followed Eliot's example rather than Austen's, making Austen the last of the great neoclassicist writers; in the process, moral idealism has made way for sympathy and tolerance.

If we have given up idealism for sympathy and tolerance, it is worth asking what price we have paid for the sacrifice; and it is also worth asking how much sympathy and tolerance is usually denied for idealism. As to the first question, what we sacrifice for tolerance and sympathy is judgement and intellectual discrimination. The liberal/romantic tendency to accept any values as inevitable facts of the human condition and any judgement as undemocratic betrays, according to Lionel Trilling, "an almost intentional intellectual weakness" and

> a nearly conscious aversion from making intellectual distinctions, almost as if out of

---

[173]George Eliot, Adam Bede (New York: Signet, 1961) 175.

> the belief that an intellectual distinction must inevitably lead to social discrimination or exclusion. We might say that those who most explicitly assert and wish to practice the democratic virtues have taken it as their assumption that all social facts--with the exception of exclusion and hardship--must be *accepted*...that no judgement must be passed on them.[174]

It would be fair to claim that the liberal impulse not to judge carries less socially harmful consequences than over zealousness, but there should be a mean between the two. The impulse to judge should be one that is exercised by persuasion rather than coercion--this is the limit to interference imposed by John Stuart Mill in On Liberty. And if Austen is judgemental in her novels, she is so in the spirit of persuasion, not coercion. To refrain from judgement and discrimination, as illustrated in the character of Jane Bennet, is seen by Austen to be a serious weakness if circumstances demand that judgements be made. Judgement is the only means of correction available in a community which does not allow other forms of social policing.

The other question to address is whether sympathy and tolerance are destroyed by judgement. The answer is that they must be, partly, but that there must be limits to the potential harm caused to those being judged. In Austen's novels, the inveterate sinners are condemned by harsh judgement and become isolated from the moral centre of the community. Austen does not waste much sympathy on the likes of Mrs Norris or George Wickham--they deserve their fates. The serious moral question is the author's attitude towards those characters whose fault lies in weakness of mind, who generally fall under the "lack" category in her moral scheme. The general tendency is to laugh at these characters, and the moral problem involved is whether such laughter is harmful--whether it carries over from the novel into the world so that we are tempted to laugh at real people who exhibit weaknesses similar to those we meet with in fiction. While there never has been strict criteria drawn for what constitutes socially harmful ridicule, there are moral limitations. Congreve mentions such in his letter of dedication which prefaces The Way of the World:

> Those characters which are meant to be ridiculous in most of our comedies are of

[174]Lionel Trilling, "The Kinsey Report" in The Liberal Imagination (London: Mercury Books, 1961) 241-2.

> fools so gross that...they should rather disturb than divert the well-natured and reflecting part of the audience; they are rather objects of charity than contempt; and instead of moving our mirth, they ought very often to excite our compassion.
>
> This reflection moved me to design some characters which should appear ridiculous, not so much through a natural folly (which is incorrigible, and therefore not proper for the stage) as through an affected wit; a wit, which, at the same time that it is affected, is also false.[175]

The prescription is against laughing at someone's natural defects, the type of contemptible activity that was once typified by those who went to insane asylums to laugh at the inmates. The essence of the comedy of manners, though, is to invite laughter at the social pretentions of those who presume more intelligence than they actually have. The comedy of manners creates stock characters who represent such pretensions, but who are not individualized sufficiently to be taken as realistic portrayals of real-life individuals. As Marvin Mudrick says, they cannot be held up against the world's standards because they are purely fictional creations designed to expose particular human traits. People in life may aspire to be wits when they are not, but there are no Witwouds in real life, just as there are no Mr Collins'.

Aristotle also says that laughter ought not to cause harm. In the Nicomachean Ethics he distinguishes the witty man from the buffoon: the witty man does not try to create laughter for its own sake, whereas the buffoon makes jokes without regard to the harm he might cause. This criterion has repercussions in the Poetics, where Aristotle speaks of comedy including the ludicrous:

> The ludicrous is a species or part, not all, of the ugly. It may be described as that kind of shortcoming which does not strike us as painful, and causes no harm to others; a ready example is afforded by the comic mask, which is ludicrous, being ugly and distorted, without suggesting any pain. (*Poetics*, 14)

There are several incidents in Jane Austen's novels which indicate that she draws the line where laughter can cause actual harm, the most famous being the Box Hill incident where

---

[175]William Congreve, "The Way of the World" in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy, ed. Scott McMillin (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1973) 153-54.

Emma insults Miss Bates. Aristotle's limit to laughter is echoed through Mr Darcy's statement that the wisest of us may be made to look foolish by someone who is always looking to make jokes (*PP*, 50). Austen's irony is not detached from her moral purpose, and that is the real clue to the limit she imposes on laughter. Austen is not Aristophanes; her work transcends the simple classical dichotomy where comedy presents the low life and tragedy the noble. The low and the noble are counterparts in her novels, and they even belong to the same class. The low are present in her novels not simply to be laughed at, but as a way of pointing to a moral contrast.

If her humour is tied to her moral purpose, so too is the emotional involvement she demands of her reader. We are not invited by Austen to indulge easily felt sympathetic emotions in favour of the virtuous characters and correspondingly hostile ones towards the bad. Her design in presenting a character is not to offer an exhibition of personality, but to show through a character's action where moral activity leads. We are not therefore asked to *identify* with a character, but we should be moved by the moral activity he represents; we should, as Mary Lascelles says, feel "imaginative sympathy" towards Austen's characters. The difference between identification and imaginative sympathy lies in the potential abuse of the reader's capacity for emotional involvement with characters. Lascelles argues that identification precludes critical understanding and is akin to daydreaming:

> Certainly the novelist's draft upon imaginative sympathy, when it is presented in the name of affection and compassion, has this twofold possibility of outcome. The power generated may be used in an active, a creative, partnership between storyteller and reader; or it may dissipate itself into daydreaming.[176]

In the first case, the reader is tacitly invited to keep his mind alive and his responses are active and critical; in the second, he is lulled into feeling unthinkingly and his responses are mechanical. Johnson, we recall, makes a similar point: that fiction has the power to captivate us so that we lose our will to withstand its impact.[177] Complete absorption in a literary work

---

[176]Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and her Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939) 213.

[177]"Rambler 4", 62.

is a form of daydreaming, an escape from confronting a possible antagonism between our desires and what reality offers us by way of fulfilling those desires.[171] We tend to identify with a character whose world is replete for him, who possesses the objects we cannot possess. In fantasy we see ourselves in that character's place; we allow ourselves to become him and the real problem of our own frustrated desire is evaded. Thus literature must carry a corrective to the possibility of identification; it must, in Johnson's view, be certain of its effects. For him, this certainty can be achieved by the author having strong moral convictions and a firm understanding of the difference between virtue and vice. This difference must be clearly shown in his work even though life itself affords us few opportunities to make an uncomplicated separation between virtue and vice.

Johnson here affirms the classical requirement that a work of literature fulfill its moral obligations at the expense of simple mimesis, for mimesis is not simply an imitation of life, but of the highest possible ideals that are humanly attainable. The inclusion of *possible* is essential; it leaves room for that necessary sympathetic attachment we must have towards human moral endeavour. Such attachment is possible only if characters behave like men and not like gods--Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero is built upon the possibility that we may recognize heroic action as human action. The difference between identification and the moral affinity arising from sympathetic attachment is that the former allows us to take the individual character as a focus of sympathetic attention, whereas the latter requires us to see beyond the display of character and to view his actions as a subject of praise and blame. Here we need our critical moral faculties as well as our capacity for sympathy and abhorrence. Aristotle requires from a work the possibility that the moral life itself--the pursuit of happiness--will come under the scrutiny of the reader. Because the moral life is action, our

---

[171]Freud observes that identification with another is an infantile regression. It first occurs in life in the post-Oedipal stage, where the infant, realizing he cannot possess the parent whom he desires, identifies with the parent who does possess what he wants. Freud argues that such identification involves loss of sense of self and actually retards development. Freud's well known criticism that fiction by nature encourages daydreaming is discussed by Lionel Trilling in "Freud and Literature" in The Liberal Imagination, 34-57. For Freud on identification see On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis (Harmondsworth: The Freud Pelican Library vol.11, 1984) 258-259, 367ff.

affinity must be primarily toward a character's disposition, his tendency to make choices about how to act, not primarily to his exhibition of selfhood. Aristotle defines the limits of identification when he says that action and plot are more important than ethos: it is not when a character reveals himself that he represents what is typical about human nature, but when his role in the action is moulded into a whole by the plot. The plot creates the impression of unity, of there being nothing outside what is represented, by linking the events of the story according to causal relationships. However, character is by no means unimportant, for it is to the characters that we turn our sympathetic attention. The revelation of the universal is not itself emotionally charged (except for philosophers); our emotions are evoked when a character experiences the consequences of the choices he makes.

Such is the way our sympathy for characters is regulated by Austen in her novels: we are to feel for them according to their moral bent. If we sympathize with Mary Crawford, we have missed the point; if we fail to sympathize with Fanny Price, we have missed the point. Misguided sympathy for Mary and misguided hostility towards Fanny is a failure of reading because neither character is an artistic misrepresentation. Austen did not create a meek Fanny by accident or create a saucily charming Mary without regard to the possible effect such a contrast might have on the presumed bias of the average reader towards the livelier character. Austen knew that her average reader would prefer Mary, and she plays a psychological trick on them. We have to care for characters, as A.C. Bradley tells us;[179] but he overlooks the point that our caring must be more than simple liking or personal preference. Austen spells out more than once the difference between liking based on personal preference and true affinity--in Elizabeth Bennet's hostility towards Darcy and partiality for Wickham, and in Emma's relationship with Harriet and Frank Churchill. Bradley nevertheless falls into Austen's trap. He does not care for Fanny even though he knows the author expects him to, and he even admits he is at fault for not caring.[180] Bradley shows himself unprepared, because of his bias, to be imaginatively sympathetic: he will not forgo his bias towards the livelier heroines to discover the possibility of sympathy with another type. Bradley's refusal to care

[179] "Jane Austen", 62.
[180] "Jane Austen", 62.

illustrates the difference between identification and imaginative sympathy; the one invites us to relive our prejudice, the other to consider an alternative. This is why the one is self-gratifying and the other imaginative.

If we respond to literature in a way that is flattering to the self, literature loses for us its potentially humanizing effect and becomes merely wish-fulfillment. John Stuart Mill sees this problem in his Autobiography when he tells us of his search for poetry that will relieve his depression. He first tries Byron, but rejects that author because: "The poet's state of mind was too like my own". But in Wordsworth's poems he finds the possibility that happiness can be achieved, even though he believes, in his depression, that no such happiness is possible. In reading Wordsworth's poems

> I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared by all human beings; which had no connexion with struggle or imperfection, but would be richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial source of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence.[181]

Mill's testament is not only to the personal healing power of the poetry, but also to the possibility of universal happiness that could derive from a sympathetic response to Wordsworth. Similarly, Austen creates in her work a vision of an ideal for humanity. She involves her readers emotionally with that ideal, which is as powerful an answer as any to the scoffs of the cynic. She is an idealist; she shows that she is not an angst-ridden, isolated soul, an artist who would damn humanity before giving it a chance to respond to the potentially humanizing effect of her art.

[181] J.S.Mill, Autobiography (Boston: Riverside Editions, 1969) 89.

## VI. Bibliography

### Primary Sources


Aristotle

*Met* = The Works of Aristotle: Vol 8 Metaphysica. Trans. W.D.Ross. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928.

*NE* = The Nicomachean Ethics. Trans. Martin Ostwald. Indianapolis: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1962.

*Poetics* = Aristotle on the Art of Poetry. Trans Lane Cooper. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1913.

Jane Austen

*E* = Emma. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

*MP* = Mansfield Park. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

*P* = Persuasion. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

*PP* = Pride and Prejudice. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

*NA* = Northanger Abbey. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

*SS* = Sense and Sensibility. Oxford: The World's Classics, 1980.

Selected Letters. Ed. R.W.Chapman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955.


### Selected Secondary Sources


Allott, Mariam. Novelists on the Novel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

Bate, Walter Jackson. From Classic to Romantic. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946.

Blair, Hugh. Sermons. London, 1784. Microfiche by Lost Cause Press, Louisville 1964.

Booth, Wayne. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961.

Boswell, James. The Life of Samuel Johnson Ed. Bergen Evans. New York: The Modern Library, 1952.

Bradley, A.C. "Jane Austen" in A Miscellany. London: Macmillan, 1929.

Bronson, Bertrand H., Ed. Samuel Johnson: Rasselas, Poems and Selected Prose. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958.

Brooks, Cleanth. The Well Wrought Urn. New York: Harvest, 1947.

Burke, Edmund. "Letter to a Noble Lord" in Eighteenth-century English Literature. Ed. Tillotson, Fussell et al. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969.

Burke, Edmund. Reflections on the Revolution in France. Ed. Thomas Mahoney. New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1955.

Burke, Kenneth. A Grammar of Motives. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Butcher, S.H. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art. New York: Dover, 1951.

Congreve, William. "The Way of the World" in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Comedy Ed. Scott McMillin. New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1973.

Conrad, Joseph. "Preface to The Nigger of *the Narcissus*" in Three Great Tales of Joseph Conrad. New York: Vintage, no date.

Crane, R.S. "The Plot of Tom Jones" in Essays on the Eighteenth-century Novel. Ed. Robert Spector. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965.

Edinger, William. Samuel Johnson and Poetic Style. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

Eliot, George. Adam Bede. New York: Signet, 1961.

Eliot, T.S. What is a Classic?. London: Faber and Faber, 1945.

Else, Gerald F. Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957.

Frege, Gottlob. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry" in The Philosophy of Logic Ed. P.F.Strawson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freud, Sigmund. On Metapsychology. Harmondsworth: The Freud Pelican Library vol.11, 1984.

Friedrich, Carl. Ed. The Philosophy of Hegel. New York: The Modern Library, 1953.

Geach, Peter. The Virtues. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Goodman, Paul. The Structure of Literature. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1954.

Grice, H.P. "Logic and Conversation" in Syntax and Semantics 111: Speech Acts Eds. Peter Cole and Jerry H. Morgan. New York: Academic Press, 1975.

Halliwell, Stephen. Aristotle's Poetics. London: Duckworth, 1986.

James, Henry. "The Lesson of Balzac" in The Future of the Novel Ed. Leon Edel. New York: Vintage, 1956.

James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction" in The Future of the Novel Ed. Leon Edel. New York: Vintage, 1956.

Joachim. H.H. The Nicomachean Ethics: A Commentary. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957.

Johnson, Samuel. A Dictionary of the English Language. 4 Vols. London: Longman, 1805.

Lascelles, Mary. Jane Austen and her Art. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Leavis, F.R. Anna Karenina and Other Essays. London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.

Leavis, F.R. The Common Pursuit. London: The Hogarth Press, 1984.

Litz, A.Walton. "A Development of Self: Character and Personality in Jane Austen's Fiction" in Jane Austen's Achievement Ed. Juliet MacMaster. London: Macmillan, 1976.

Lukacs, Georg. The Meaning of Contemporary Realism Trans. John and Necke Mander. London: Merlin, 1963.

MacIntyre, Alisdair. After Virtue. London: Duckworth, 1985.

Merrett, Robert. "The Concept of Mind in Emma". English Studies in Canada 5, 1. Spring 1980, 39-55.

Mill, John Stuart. Autobiography. Boston: Riverside, 1969.

Mudrick, Marvin. Irony as Defense and Discovery. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952.

Muir, Edwin. The Structure of the Novel. London: The Hogarth Press, 1963.

Odmark, John. An Understanding of Jane Austen's Novels. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981.

Page, Norman. The Language of Jane Austen. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972.

Plato. The Republic Trans. F.M.Cornford. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941.

Plato. Gorgias Trans. W.C. Helmbold. Indianapolis: Library of Liberal Arts, 1952.

Price, Martin. "The Other Self" in Imagined Worlds Eds. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor. London: Methuen, 1968.

Ryle, Gilbert. "Jane Austen and the Moralists" in English Literature and British Philosophy. Ed. S.P.Rosenbaum. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971.

Searle, John. "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse" in Expression and Meaning. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Searle, John. Speech Acts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

Shklovsky, Victor. "Sterne's Tristram Shandy: Stylistic Commentary" in Russian Formalist Criticism--Four Essays. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965.

Tave, Stuart. Some Words of Jane Austen. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973.

Trilling, Lionel. "Emma" in Beyond Culture. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

Trilling, Lionel. "The Kinsey Report" in The Liberal Imagination. London: Mercury, 1961.

Trilling, Lionel. "Mansfield Park" in The Opposing Self. New York: Viking, 1955.

Watt, Ian. The Rise of the Novel. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1957.

Whalley, George. "Jane Austen: Poet" in Jane Austen's Achievement Ed. Juliet MacMaster. London: Macmillan, 1976.

Whalley, George. "On Translating Aristotle's Poetics" in Studies in Literature and the Humanities. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1985.

Whatley, Richard. "The Method of Jane Austen" in Jane Austen: The Critical Heritage Ed. B.C.Southam. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.

Willis, Lesley. "Religion in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park". English Studies in Canada X111 (March 1987) 65-78.

Wilson, Angus. "Evil in the English Novel". The Listener. December 27, 1962.

Winters, Yvor. Forms of Discovery. Chicago: Allan Swallow, 1967.

Winters, Yvor. The Function of Criticism. Denver: Allan Swallow, 1957.